

Interview 4 - Part 1

- Q. Our fourth interview series, May 29, 1987 Friday. This is interview #1. We would like to take you back in time. Think back when you were a small child. Maybe you can tell us a little about your family, yourself, and where you grew up?
- A. My family originated from *Battambang* Province. When I grew up, my mom and dad moved to the *Srok* which call *Mongkol Borei*, right near the river (RM: you know that town. ST: Yes. Because I guess Svang grew up in *Battambang* right. In the city itself. ST: Yes. RM: You grew up in a small village outside of the city of *Battambang*). Yes but I'm very well known all of the city in *Battambang* because I came to study there. I think since I grew up I knew that I had a lot of family: uncle, aunt, but my grandmother, when I was to grow up, I didn't even know her name. I always call her grandmother and grandma. It struck me one time. No. Very often all her family always bring something special food to give it to her. They asked me to give to grandma "*Thnorm*". I didn't know who she was, because usually in my family we never called the old people by name. We always call it sister, brother, mom or dad, something like that. I begin to know her name since then. She was a very, very quiet woman. She never do anything at all like homework, housework or cooking. No. When I grow up, I always see my whole family respected her and treated her very well like in the morning, afternoon and supper we all bring the food and talk with respect to her all the time. She likes to plant vegetables a little bit, but she didn't do too much. She always ask her grandchildren to do that. She is the commander. My grandmother had 2 children. One died since she was a baby. My mother told me and my mother. That is all. She is the only one child.
- Q. Was this your mother's mother?
- A. Yes.
- Q. So you always remember your grandmother as being in the house?
- A. Yes, being in the house. She never ever gave us one time trouble. She is quiet. She is just like a Buddha, except a Buddha don't talk and she talks. If you give food to her and she eats it. She never say I won't eat this. She really good. A lot of time that she was sick she never moaning and groaning or complaining. I'm sick, this and that. Usually we know she sick when she slept late, and usually, you know, to wake her up we say "grandma get up." She couldn't open her eye and we know that she was sick. So we try to coining and give her some medicine, traditional medicine which my cousin (of my father)makes all this medicine for the evening. He lived very close to us.

The story of my grandfather is a little bit mixed up. I didn't know he was kind of

"hot stuff." He didn't live with my grandmother since I grew up. He had another wife. I think my grandmother was very mad at the time, but she never expressed her anxiety or do something that really made a scene to the people. I never knew what was going on. When I was small, my mom took me to the countryside because my grandparents had a large plantation, a lot of property, a lot of plantation. During that time when he was married, my mom took me to his wedding. I was very surprised. I didn't know that he was my grandfather. Because he came once and he bring all food for us.

Q. Was this your mother's father?

A. Yes. He was my mother's father.

Q. Did you go to a wedding where he married another woman?

A. Yes. I didn't know he was my grandfather. I was just surprised, but I didn't say that. I never saw the old people get married. I don't know why. I didn't know what a grandfather mean, how close, married to my grandmother. My grandmother never express anything. She is very peaceful and she will not talk to him. If he came and brought special food and money and give it to her, she took it, but she never say "How are you?" I think that my grandmother comes from a very high class family, because I think her father was the *Srok* leader a long time ago. He just like a king in the town. So the words everything that she used were not normal.

Q. It is very interesting that your first memories are of your grandmother. Why do think that is so?

A. Well, I think I love her very much, because she would never do anything that would hurt me. She always loved to see me and the whole family. She is a very fair woman. Even though my grandfather had some children with his second wife, amazing that my grandmother loved those children very much. He loved my grandmother. She came and she would talk to him, bla bla bla. A couple of times I talked to her and say, "Grandma, can I eat this food?" She would say, "No! Don't eat it, honey, give it to your grandfather's children." I would say "Why?" She would say "I feel sorry for them." So she would give the food to them. Those kids would come to live in my home for education. One time when my grandfather was very sick. He was afraid he was going to die, he even dreamed that his mother get mad so that she say that there was some conflict in the family, and he thought because my grandmother didn't talk to him. The reason why she didn't talk to him because when she get mad she don't talk, and she would go to the pagoda and stay with us for I don't know how long. She would stay and make promise that she would not go back to my grandfather, and she would not talk to him for the rest of her life.

Q. She would never talk to him again because he left her?

A. I think she thought he was unfair. She think like that. Even though my grandfather not with her, we all love him and take good care of him. I remember when she was getting old and she was confused. Before I'm not realize because grieving the loss, the hard time my grandfather give to her she keeps it on her mind. She is getting old and so much confused. Now I realize that cost her confusing. A lot of time she is a very confusing. We give her food to eat and another of her grandchildren pass the food around, she say that "You know, nobody gave me the food to eat yet;" but she just ate it. We enjoy her very much even though she was like that. My father and my mother, he was kind of an uncle to my mother. He was distant, not close. My father's family and my mother's cannot relate, it is still distant. And we live around the same area. My father had 3 brothers and sisters; one older brother and one older sister. My mom, I told you, she is the only one. My mom and my dad have 12 children together.

Q. How many - 12?

A. Twelve.

Q. You were one of twelve children?

A. Yes. I am number 10.

Q. You were number 10. So you had nine other brothers and sisters.

A. Yes. When I grew up, I saw only six. Six were gone already. That cost a lot of conflict for me and my mother I think in Cambodia, the mother and children have a very close relationship also. I think two persons get married and I think getting married is very important, but when they have children the children are the priority. Each of us stayed with my mom until we grew up. We sleep in the same bed. She recalled that she lost a lot of her children. She is very sad most of the time.

Q. She lost - do you mean died?

A. Yes. They died.

Q. How did they die?

A. I don't know. I didn't question her too much. When she would say something, I would just listen.

Q. You mean she had 12 babies, but not all of them lived?

A. Yes. Six of them died.

Q. Did they die as young children, teenagers, or a babies?

A. I think they died at 1-year or 2-years old. That is the most cost to her mind, because those kids still stay with her and she had breast feeding. When they died, she felt she lost a lot. My mother, when I grew up, she never had a real happy time. That is because she lost her kids.

Q. Would your mother tell you she was sad because she lost her children?

A. She didn't say that, but you could see it in her face.

Q. You could see this as a little girl? You noticed that your mother was real sad?

A. Yes. I could see that. I could see that when I was a little girl, because of my aunt, even though we had my mother, have her first cousin, but they were real close family. Just like blood sisters. They cared for one another very much. All my mom's children will be loved my aunt and uncle. My mom won't talk too much. Mostly my uncle and my aunt will ask "Your mom, you know, she is very sad and you should be taking care of her because she is a very decent woman, and you couldn't find a good mother like that. When we saw her face sad, we all concerned about her. We all come and talk very nice to her. I think the last time she loss my sister, my first sister, it seems like her favorite one, because my oldest sister whatever my mom would try this and that, and she always make sure that in the suitcase my mom clothes, money, put it in, everything set for her to travel. I think during that time, she was dying. My mom didn't even have a tear to cry, because they all dry up. I think during that time, my brother (my second brother) he invited the monk from Phnom Penh. Phnom Penh and my home town is kind of around over 300km. The monks were very helpful and he talked, like counseling so some of my sisters can get a little help, even though they still cry.

I want to talk about myself a little bit. I think when I was to grow up a little girl I was having a tough time to go school. I didn't want to go far away from my mother. She wear a bra, but an old style bra. A Cambodian woman soon as they have the baby the countryside so she don't care too much. She don't have a bra, long bra, long slip and it was hot too so she just wear like that and she would chew the beetle nut. I would grab her like that. I don't want her get away from me. During that time, I think the school they start right in the pagoda near my home town of my home. You can see the pagoda right from my house. We have a good connection with all the monks over their. My family strongly Buddhism. I think when we go to school, we have a teacher, but I wouldn't let my mother go

home at all. I would say, "You have got to sit here, and don't sit in a way so I can see your face until it is time to go home." Sometimes I would cry and hold her blouse and she would get so silly and she would spread all her beetle nuts over my face. Besides that, I think my teacher they would just love me very much. They would come and then put me on a back of their motorcycle and they always call me "Daughter" all the time.

Q. They would call you what?

A. "Daughter, Daughter", let's go. They just give a lot of attention. I still didn't like the school too much either. My father always strongly suggest to me (to all the children) he say, "I know I have some property. I will give it to you, but education is the most important. You cannot lose as long as your life." That is what I'm going to give you so that you will become a real person. He told me it does not matter I have to sell all my clothes I have only my shortpants as long as all my kids do good in school. I will be very proud. I think after that I continued to go to high school and college. When I was in college, my grandmother was very sick again.

Q. You were in college?

A. High school here would mean college in Cambodia.

Q. Were the teachers still coming to your home for high school?

A. No. Just the first year. They didn't have time to do that for me.

Q. Did you go to high school in the city?

A. Yes. Before I go to the high school in the city, I don't have plans and keep jumping back and forth. I have no plans about what I am talking about. I would bring memories of the past and future. I know you put together you could just pick what you want.

Q. I was very interested in that, because you were talking about your father telling you how much he loved education and then you were talking about your high school.

A. Yes. He will make the bicycle for me that no one in the town have it. The bicycle is from France. I know that he loved the children very much, but he never show it. My father he call, he not show. He not like my mom. When he get mad, he would ask me to sit then say, "You have no idea how much I love you kids. No one in the town has a bicycle that that. Like so and so children. That was true. He say, "When you try the bicycle, I keep watching you from the window until

you were gone." When I was in primary school, the teachers thought I had a lot of sense of humor, comedy. They loved me very much. As a matter of fact, they know my father too, because of the small town. One time I was very sick. I didn't know why I was sick. Since my family lost my sister, I think my father get very scared about that. I didn't go to school for a month. My mom go to the fortune teller to ask why I was very sick. Is it a spirit bothering her or is it an unlucky year or something like that? The fortune teller say that the spirits get mad with me because during that time when the teacher took all the students camping, I always had good food like a lobster. My mom travel from Phnom Penh to my home town very often and when she came back, she always brought back some lobsters and we cook it and she put it in the pot. So when we went to camp, we always have something like that. All the teachers loved to sit and eat together with me. The fortune teller say that the spirit was very angry with me because I didn't put the food for them. See, usually in my family if you go to some strange place with food, we have to split a little bit and we say this is for all the spirits. Please eat it and give us safety. I was young. I didn't know about that. My mother asked them "What can they do to get me back?" They say that my mom has to pay them \$100.00 to take my soul out from them, because my soul was put inside the rock, other members of me and couldn't get out. During that time I remember my mom and family bring some of my jewelry, all my makeup, something like that to put the place. Go from the fortune teller and give it to me and they put the leaves which in Cambodia present used to represent the soul. Usually they say that this is *Theanvy's* soul so now we have it back so that we are going to give it to her and she will be with her parents who will take care of her again. When we came, those people came back and they would put the leaves and stick leaves in my ears and some of them tied a knot over my wrist, and they would also invite the fortune teller (which he is an old man and he has been taking care of my family all along) he came to do the prayer to call back my soul. It was amazing that I never opened my eyes. It was amazing that the airplane crossed near my home. I just got up. I said, "Look! The airplane crossed over our house." Later I still almost choking once in a while. My mom decided to take me to the hospital because she afraid to lose me again. She prayed to all the spirits to say we ask you to give us permission to take this kid with us, so she could get treatment. I came to *Battambang* city which I have been cured since then. I think I was 10-years old when I was teasing my sister my older sister she was studying for her exam and usually my father we never bother him too much because he is a very serious man and like her room we don't want to go to misplace something. Because when he came, if he doesn't see, he will get mad. It is a quiet room because my house is three house joined together. During that time, my dad went to *Battambang* city and my sister was study to get her exam. I usually try to tease her. I knock on the door and say, "Sister, dad is coming soon and you better get out of his room." I didn't even do that yet and the dog jumped and bit me. As you can see, this is the scar. I cried so hard. My mother thought that I was in critical condition because I usually move around so much. I was not

a quiet kid. My mother said "Oh, I'm glad, because she move to much she should get that." But she doesn't know that the dog bite me. When she saw that, she was very worried. During that time, I had three maids, two were one was 15-years old, the other one was in her early 40's. They cooked for us. Imagine I was around 11 years old. They was carrying my feet. I was to much for them. Because I was not small. We went to the nurse in countryside, but they couldn't do anything to me, so they had to send me to *Battambang* city to get cured. During that time, my mom and I went to *Battambang* city and I got cured by the doctor who give me 2l injection. We diet a lot of the food we are not supposed to eat until after 2-years.

Q. Did the doctor think you would get rabbies?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you get a rabbi shot?

A. Yes.

Q. Was the dog rabbit?

A. Yes.

Q. The dog that attacked you had rabbis?

A. Yes. The reason that everybody knew that was because my dad was so mad when he came home, he said I am going to kill that dog. After the dog bit me, he died himself.

Q. Was your family frightened that you were going to die of rabbis?

A. Yes. Deathly afraid, since they lost my sister. After that, my grandmother was very sick and my dad he make the coffin for her already. We don't think she is going to last. She was like that for 2 weeks She cannot even eat anything at all. All her teeth cross one another and usually we just drop the orange juice for her. She can breathe, but nothing else beside that. We have the doctor who came and give her an injection all the time. Later the doctor asked me if I would like to learn to do that. They wanted me to give my grandmother injections so they can keep the medicine in my house (which I did). I do intravenous a lot of injections to her. Again, when my mom go the monk to ask about my grandmother, "What is it going to be? Is she going to die or what." The monk say that we need to do the traditional way because my grandmother she really talks something wrong. Then we realize that she talked some thing wrong because she never use even one bad word. During that time, my father (he lost business) so he is a little bit cranky. He was sleeping so soundly and I was holding the teapot. The teapot

when you pour all the time and the water goes underneath. When you put in the plate a silver plate and could stack the teapot on this plate, and when you put the teapot and the plate go for one second and then they drop to the table, and it woke him up. It woke him up. I think he would get very mad at me that time. He would talk very loud, yell and my grandmother go right in front of him. She would say, "You cannot do anything to her because that is my grandchild. If you want to do anything, wait until I die." She was a very protective grandmother. My dad stopped. That is why considering she talk bad word, the spirit holds these words.

Q. Did she ever do that before?

A. No. Never. They say that is why is very sick. We do it the traditional way. She slept like that. We had four monks (2 on each side). We make a little hill from the sand and we have incense and candle. When the monks started to pray, they throw the holy water. With just one drop of holy water she wake up. When she woke up, the same day my dad dreamed that he saw my grandmother, she holds now really old bag with the clothes and she sat along side the river and right away saw my dad and said, "Son, I am lost. I'm always glad that I saw you. Please bring me home." The same day that one drop of holy water she just woke up. When she woke up, during that time I was elected to the city to high school and she ask where are my grandchildren. I really take care of my family, like my mother, grandmother. I took care by giving the injection and medicine. I love it. As a matter of fact, I love to wear the white dress to pretend I was a doctor. When it was time to give the injection, I have on my white shirt and everybody keep saying, "Here doctor." I love it. I wanted to become a doctor (something like that) since I was to grow up. I never get my hand on, so I became a teacher.

Q. Why didn't you become a doctor?

A. Why I didn't become a doctor. I think one thing is that when you are young, you cannot think clearly. I don't know. It seems my mind wouldn't be like I am now. During that time it seemed like yes I wanted, but if it was too difficult, I'm not going to have patience. I would rather do something else. At least I became a teacher. In Cambodia, I think the safe and honor job for the women is teacher, or nurse, and doctor. That is honor job for the woman. When my grandmother was to get better, my grandfather started to get very sick. When he got sick, he asked my grandmother to forgive what he did to her. Amazing that my mother never dropped one tear. No. Usually in Cambodia, we want to do forgive from one another by using the outfit of the monks in a silver plate and we give to the person who you get mad at and that mean the sign for forgiveness. I don't think my grandmother ever forgive my grandfather completely until he died. She never dropped even one tear or talk anything about him at all.

When I was a child, my sister and I (2-years apart). She had a lot of attention from my mom, because she is the little one. She always has more power. She would do something to me. She would hit me (not hard, not abuse). I would always cry. I never fight back with her. I would just cry and tell my mom, and she would say, "Honey, don't get mad with her because she is your little sister." Sometime my father and my mother would buy something like gold or jewelry, and because I am the middle child they would say give it to your sister first, because she is younger than her. I never had a sense what so ever about jealousy between my sisters and brothers at all. I love them very much and they love me very much. We are very fair to one an other. I was in school. My first sister who has a nephew in Canada. She took the position right after my mom and my dad. She was married and have her own business. She cared about herself less than cared about her own sister's life. She cared about her family because when I was in school, all the time my jewelry have been changed, every month. She would always try to find a good star and give it to me. She never cared about herself. We would treat her just like second mother.

Q. Is this your older sister?

A. Yes. My older sister. Again, when I was young, my father have only one son, so he was crazy about his son. He wanted to have more, but my mom had five girls and one son. I was my father's favorite, because I am not afraid of anybody. If you want me to go, I go. I'm not a good cook. I hate it. Somebody will cook like that and we always help one another. Myself, not my sisters or this and that. If I eat before and whoever eats after, had to do dishes. As a matter of fact we have maids to do dishes all the time. Even though you have a maid, on holidays they still have to go to visit their family. During that time, I felt like I lost my voice and I couldn't do anything. I was known as that lazy cook. I really enjoy of the family. I would sit and talk about something funny and make everybody laugh all the time. My grandmother sometimes she is almost choking because she laughed so hard when I talked. I could imitate the people from the countryside, most part of Cambodia their accent. I came to *Battambang* city to continue school. I was stayed at the parent-in-law of my old sister who had 3 children and 1 in France. He was professor teaching at a French university. He is around 2-years younger than me. I have not seen him for almost 15-years. When I came to stay in that place, it was amazing the parent-in-law of my sister who had died. They were very good to my parent, even though they were in-laws. They would treat one another just like a sister. Every season almost every month, my mom always send some fruit special to them. They always send something special to my mom, especially clothes to my grandmother.

Q. Was your sister who died your older sister?

A. Yes.

Q. How did she die?

A. I think during that time as well as I can remember she had a miscarriage and then after that her health became worse and worse all the time. I think we took ... she was sick for several months. We knew she was very sick and my mom would go to talk the monk and ask the monk to come to give her pray and the monk said yes in the morning he would come. In the morning, the monk refused to come because he saw the women in a white dress came (like a Cambodian nun who wears a white dress) going from ...staying in front of him, the woman do like he said, you cannot go to that house. If you go, I am going to give you hug and you are going to lose all your monkness. You cannot be a monk anymore. The monk know my sister not going to be alive. That is why he didn't come. And sure enough in the morning at 4:00, my sister died. When she died, I was with her. I was with her all the time.

Q. How old were you then?

A. I was very young when she was very sick. I was in primary school. I think someone called me. I was her favorite sister. I was the one who ran around all the time when she wanted me to go to the post office. I would go buy things. I always do that. I cared for her the whole time until she passed away. I didn't know she was going to die or not. I had a strange feeling that I don't know why she would die. Her children were very little during that time. The baby was on the bottle because she would never do the breast feeding, because she would throw-up. When my sister died, my brother-in-law he had a business out of town. During that time that she died because he did not know he passed through *Battambang* city. Because he didn't know, we told him that my sister died. He cried, cried, and cried the whole time. He said he shouldn't have gone away. I should have taken care of her. My mother was a little bit upset. She said, "You shouldn't be crying too much because you are out of town too much. I am the one who should be crying the most." He said, "No mom. I am the one who should be suffering more." He grabbed all her clothes that she recently wear and put in his brief case. After the funeral, everything was all set. He didn't talk to me either. One of her sons, her second son, the one in France now, he is being a monk maybe four, five hours, shaved his head and wear the long dress to payback for his mother. The other one, the little one, he just don't know. The girl, the big one, she was very little. She is not too old to understand. She cried, but I don't know if she knew what it meant. Her older daughter is not with her all the time either. She was taking care by her parent-in-law. Even though she is getting old. Even though she was quite old, 12-years old, she still didn't know how to get dressed herself. The maid in the morning would put her dresses out, wash her, and send her to school. My mother is not grateful with it, because she said the children should learn how to get dressed by that age. When my sister died, her husband

went to *Phnom Penh* because he was a contractor. He made a lot of money. He would go out of town. Finally, his older daughter went to live with him. During that time, it wasn't good for her either, because my brother-in-law had somebody cook for him. But sometimes (I wouldn't say all the men) he would fool around with her too, which is not good for my niece to live there because she was growing up. I think later my niece get married to a man who was a police chief. She is married to him. That was the problem. Again, his second son still with his parents. He was studying. He was an excellent student. He was very bright. He got scholarships all the time. Until he went to France, he got a scholarship from the government. The little one, because he too young, all these things break to his family bothered his mother-in-law, even though at the time he doesn't know. Psychologically, it does bother him a lot. He has no place completely. He does not know where he belongs. He was my mom's favorite.

Q. What happened to him?

A. Well really he wanted to stay with his father. His father was not a bad man. If you pinched him, he would say "Ouch! I have to do it." If nobody said it, he is in another world. He was a nice man. His mind didn't work like it should. Somebody had to pinch him, like you have to do in the Chinese New Year. I think she know too. Because I'm part Chinese and Cambodian, we usually wrap the money in the paper and give it to the family as good luck. The family ask a lot. He never think about it until his mother said, "Did you give any to your sister-in-law?" He would say, "Oh, I forget." He has got to do this. If nobody tells him, he won't do it.

Q. Is his son still alive?

A. No. His son is not alive. He would stay with him. His father in the town all the time. I don't think he was crazy about the maid. He didn't know the maid was his father's girlfriend. It was kind of hard for the boy. My family always worried that the girl would think the father is too old, and maybe she would undress the boy. So we would worry about this. We took him to stay with my brother, which was not too far from one another. He lived there. I think my nephew had a lot of grieving about his family. As a matter of fact, he just didn't know who he belonged to. He stayed there. I think he would get hurt about his father, because he was not home all the time. He had a lot of questions, "Why did his mother die? What was the purpose?" no answer for that. His mind bothered him a lot. He would go to take an exam, diploma, he finished high school and he was going to college. He is very bright, but he had a second session. He could go second time. His mind just won't allow him to do that. He was very frustrated. I think he wanted to kill himself.

Q. Did he kill himself?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he hang himself?

A. No. First time he took medicine (I'm the only blood aunt in *Phnom Penh*). He would come in and out all the time. When he took the medicine, I went over there to see him and could see the missing pill in the palm of his hand. He took the medicine and I took him to see the monk. The monk said that he will be o.k. I came back home and thought everything was fine. The last time I think he traveled to *Mongkol Borey* to my home town and he would go sit in front of his mother's picture and he sat down. Nobody paid attention. After he died, we started to talk about it. He sat so long in front of his mother. When he came back, I told him, "You know you got to go to school." He told me, "No. I don't want to go to school anymore." I said, "I think you should continue." I didn't pay any attention again. One night he came to my place in *Phnom Penh*. He would scare everybody. I lived with my cousin first in *Phnom Penh* and she had to make two. Those people were scaring us. So my nephew knocked the door not like that before. I had something bothering in me. I didn't know what a prediction that make those people scared of him. A couple of days later my sister-in-law come to tell me that he died. He was my favorite, because he lost his parents. I feel very compassionate to him. When I heard he died, I almost passed out. I couldn't believe it. I went to his house to see, and they took him to the Pagoda. He stayed with the sister of his father. He stayed with my brother, he stayed with his father's sister, no place that would give him security. He took a bath around 9:00 and said don't wake me up. He went upstairs and burned incense and you can see his picture and his mother's picture right there. I never saw him with those pictures before. He died just like he fell asleep with a blanket covering him. You can see in the calendar he kept crossing out all the time at 13. I can still remember 13 was crossed out. He put the skeleton symbol on 13. Finally, they took him to the Pagoda. I telex to my mom and she came from the countryside. My dad didn't come. He hurt himself by bumping his head to the table so many times. My mom came, but she had no words to say. Later my nephew, his nose and his mouth has the blood because the medicine cut everything inside. My mom burned incense. She told him please go peaceful and don't think about the family who is left behind anymore and then the blood stopped. I received a letter from him that with money over a 100 *Riels* and he give it to me. He said that I am not the younger one of the family. My brother, he is the younger one in the family. He wrote a letter to his father blaming his father.

Q. Did he blame his father?

A. Yes. He said that although the every low people who make money to live day-by-day, they know how to take care for their family better than you.

Q. Was the father having an affair with the maid?

A. Yes. Even though he didn't have affairs, he acted as though he was in a dream. The father. The legacy of going on. My nephew and friend. He is lot like the father. I know that. That is why I always gave him a family pictures.

Q. Is he in a dream?

A. No. He doesn't know what a family means. He doesn't know what he has to give to a family. He is not responsible. He don't know about that at all. My family owed him by not telling him what is going on in the family. We never told him.

Q. Was there a daughter too? What happened to her?

A. She is married and has three children. During the Communist, I am almost positive, they were all killed.

Q. They killed her and the family?

A. Yes.

Q. One of the things I hear you saying is that in your family there were a lot of deaths and suffering. Was there? Did you feel when you were growing up there was a lot of sadness because of these deaths?

A. Yes and mostly in my family the children deaths. I think it caused a lot of

Q. The deaths of your nephew and your sister or the deaths of the miscarriages before you were born?

A. Yes. It seems like a lot of deaths. But I never know...My sister only the old one who died, the others of my mom's children and us as far as I recall. Like 2-year, 1-year.

Q. You never knew them? They were before you?

A. No. Before me. I never knew them.

Q. What would you say was the saddest experience in your childhood?

A. The saddest experience of my childhood I think I was worried too much about my mom because I love her very much.

Q. You were always worried about you mom?

- A. Yes. I always worried about her. At 11-years old I start to have a lot of difficulty before I fell asleep. I always think that if my mother died, who would I call mom and who is going to treat me that way. I was thinking this since I was 11-years old, believe it or not.
- Q. You worried about this since you were 11-years old?
- A. I worry about her a lot.
- Q. As you look back, what would you say was the happiest moment in your life? Were there any moments that stand out for you that really make you happy?
- A. I think that the happiest time I had when the family sat together and talk and my mom is happy and I was happy.
- Q. When your mom was happy, you were happy?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Was that often? Was your mother happy a lot or was that rare?
- A. It is hard to say, because she is quiet woman. She never expressed, "I'm not happy. I'm very sad." Usually we guess by looking at her face. The most happy time that I had was with my grandmother. She was just excellent. You could tease her, you could do anything to her and it wouldn't bother her.
- Q. Did your grandmother make you very happy?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Do you love your grandmother?
- A. Yes. When she take a bath, usually in Cambodia we use a traditional skirt you wear the skirt and hook-up. She cannot walk now. I would go with her because my mom would always say if you go to wash your grandmother. You're going to be very good. Your children are going to do that to you. She would always talk to me like that.
- Q. Did you help your grandmother get dressed? What would you do with the skirt?
- A. The skirt. Well, when she would go on but sometimes take a bath, I would pour the water, but sometimes my sister would, not me all the time. One would pour water and one would wash her hair, then scrub her back, clean her back. After

that, she would take skirt out and I would wash that and hang it up for her.

Q. Did that really make you happy?

A. Yes.

Q. Svang has been quiet here. Do you have any questions, Svang.

A. No.

Q. Are there any dreams or memories of your parents or grandmother that you have now? Do you think back to them a lot?

A. Now. Very often. Right now it is because I came to this Country alone. I have a cousin but in Maryland and California. I decided to be here because I wanted to be independent I just want to grow by myself. A lot of time I miss my parents very much. I recall a lot of souvenirs. If it was something bad in me, I would burn incense and talk to my parents.

Q. Are your parents still alive?

A. No. They are all dead.

Q. You would burn incense and talk to them?

A. Yes. I would burn incense and talk to them or I make food for them, but not often because I don't have time. Sometimes I take a ride to the monk, but it is amazing that sometime when I have a frustrating feeling, I always saw my mom picture.

Q. Do you see your mom's picture in your mind?

A. No. Not my mind. In a dream.

Q. In a dream?

A. Yes. According to Cambodian beliefs, I think she is always watching me.

Q. Watching after you?

A. Yes. Watching. If I'm driving on the highway or I get scared, my mind flicks right away to the Buddha and my parents.

Q. Your grandmother too? Does she come into your mind?

- A. My grandmother I think she came back not often like my mom. Because she has been with me until she died. I have a lot of good souvenirs with him, and I feel like I'm really great that she die. I have no guilt.
- Q. Who do you think your like as a woman? Do you think your like your grandmother, your mother, or both?
- A. I'm like both.
- Q. Who do you feel you take after? If someone was watching you and thinking about you, would they say, "She reminds me of her grandmother, mother, or both?" Or maybe you are very different from both of them?
- A. A lot of people recall I look just like my older sister.
- Q. You look like your older sister?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What about your personality?
- A. My personality - I don't know. My mother does not talk a lot, and my dad is not funny unless someone gives him a drink and then he get funny. He is very serious. I never think of my character, who I look like, nobody says my character looks like who. They mentioned that my face looks like my father's father, because he is completely Chinese. I look like him. As I grew up, I'm the one who ran around all the time. I miss the small town, because everybody knows everybody. When people pass by, they call me and say so and so father. They say I always smile all the time. That is the most thing they love me for. They said they never saw my face angry or this and that.
- Q. Do you smile all the time?
- A. Yes. When I was small, I smiled all the time. I think that now I changed a lot, because of the Communist. I feel guilty if I'm happy too much.
- Q. Do you smile as much as you use to?
- A. No. I don't think so.
- Q. Does Svang understand that?
- A. Yes.

- Q. One of the things you said that is interesting to me is having a Chinese background. You have Chinese blood in you from your father's side? Your mother's side too, or just your father's?
- A. My great grandmother is a Thai from Bangkok.
- Q. Your great-grandmother was a Thai on your father or mother's side?
- A. My mother's side.
- Q. Where is the Chinese?
- A. I think my grandfather was Chinese.
- Q. With your background, are you thought of as Chinese or as Cambodian?
- A. Definitely, Cambodian.
- Q. You can trace your ancestries to some Chinese background?
- A. Yes. My sister, she always mix 2; Cambodian and Chinese, and my father always do both way. For the Chinese New Year, they would do both customs.
- Q. Would your father do both customs because your grandfather was Chinese and his mother was Cambodian?
- A. Yes. Both customs. The strongly customs that we do is Cambodian.
- Q. What did your father do for a living?
- A. When I grew up, I was #10 child and he did not work anymore.
- Q. He retired?
- A. Yes. He retired. He had no money for retirement. I think he was businessman as far as I know. I think he worked with French company in traveling back and forth. He spoke a lot of languages. He spoke Laos, Vietnamese, Chinese and French. He told me that when he went to Bangkok he didn't like to speak Thai. If he spoke Thai, they heard the accent and they knew you were not born in Thailand. He even sounds like he has a very good business with the friend now. After that, he quit and then mostly we lease the land for the people.
- Q. Did he have property and lease it after he retired?

- A. Yes. My grandparents had a lot of property. When I was to grow up, I knew that my parents got money from the people who rented the property, planted rice and things like that.
- Q. I know America is different from Cambodia. But what would you say your family is: wealth, middle-class? How would you describe it in Cambodian terms?
- A. I think middle-class.
- Q. When you say your father retired after 10 children, how old was your father when you were born?
- A. He was in his 60's.
- Q. When you were born, he was 60-years old?
- A. No. I think he was in his late 50's.
- Q. Was your mother much younger than him?
- A. She was 45.
- Q. Your father was older than your mother?
- A. Yes.
- Q. This is traditional in Cambodia? How many years older was your father than your mother?
- A. Ten-years older.
- Q. Men are usually older than their wife in Cambodia?
- A. Yes. I think so.
- Q. What do you think of that custom of a man being 15-years older than his wife?
- A. I don't like the husband younger than the wife. The most is 10-years old.
- Q. In your mother's case, do you think it worked for your mother that your father was older?
- A. Yes. I will not say he was excellent, but that doesn't mean he fooled around.

- Q. Did he have other wives?
- A. No. Never. My father didn't drink. If you gave him one drink, he gave you all the money he had. In the morning when he got up, he would say give me my money. He use a lot of coffee and cigarettes.
- Q. Within your class of society, was it common for the husbands to have other wives?
- A. I think legally no. It is against the law. Even though you are married, the first wife and second wife never be equal.
- Q. I understand that it was traditional for a man to have (like your grandfather) more than one wife?
- A. I think it is quite common. The people who have a lot of wives according to my experience, I think because the men they want more power.
- Q. They want more power?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Having a lot of wives means more power?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What kind of power do you have? How do you define power?
- A. I define power by using King family. The King family has a lot of children and a lot of wives. When you have it like that, you have a lot of power and safety. I don't mean to accuse him of anything. It seems like his property.
- Q. So the man has more status if he has more wives and children?
- A. Yes. He has a lot. He doesn't have an easy life either. I don't know why they want to do that. It looks like he is a big shot.
- Q. Do you think your grandfather had 2 wives for power?
- A. He just liked a *Srok's* leader in the countryside. Everybody knew about him.
- Q. Was he a big shot in the countryside?
- A. Yes.

Q. For him it made sense to have 2 wives because he was a big shot.

A. Yes.

Q. Did he have children from the second wife?

A. Yes. My grandfather had at least 3 wives as far as I know.

Q. Three children from his second marriage.

A. No. He had three wives, or a girlfriend too. I think when my grandmother got married, her father shot the gun to wish her. I think he feel very sad because he thinks that is not a good tradition.

Q. When he shot the gun, he slipped. Does that mean he knew something wasn't good going to happen? And his daughter's husband went on to have all these wives?

A. Yes. I think if you studied about Cambodia history, I don't believe anybody would want to do anything wrong or bad. They only want to find something to do right. I think sometimes you cannot do something right, because you don't know how. Sometimes it is because of society. If you look to the King family, you can see right away neither one king have one wife. How you are the one who lives on the royal family. Everybody wants to be a big shot. He can do it, why can't I. Even though you don't want to do that, psychologically legacy.

Q. If the most powerful man in society has a hundred wives, what is he saying? He is setting an example?

A. Yes.

Q. If the King has a hundred wives, then he is setting an example for other men.

"Pr I think it is very important to have the Cambodian history. I think for the young generation we owed them explanation. If we didn't clear this up, no one could ever run the country right.

Q. You know King *Sihanouk* just gave an interview, Play Boy Magazine.

A. Oh!

Q. Play Boy Magazine, I haven't seen that yet. Sophat called me.

A. Do you want me to send you a copy. (Svang: I have it, Just a copy of his speech.

Q. I'd like to see it.

A. Oh! He is a ... I don't know. It seems like he... He has to know sense of humor and he talks, he talks, I don't like the way... I means for the country I don't care the slaves ran the country if they know how and the women could ran the country if they know how I don't care. But if you don't know, please do not pretend that you know. It hurt a lot of people (Mollica: Right, sure). I think in the future the system of Cambodia should be change. We can't keep quiet anymore because before I think the reason that country fall very easy. I think we are Cambodian, we do not keep close to the government; we don't know at all. If three people decided that Cambodia should give donation to the Vietnamese. We gona go belong to the Vietnamese. But if we compare to the United States society you know if they took Regan, the hole family to kill but you will... cannot say here United States, my country, I give up, you know. Yes, the more I study about Cambodia, the more I think that make Cambodia fell. I understand more and more.

Q. How would you describe your religious life as a child?

A. My great grandfather built the Pagoda near my home town. They put his name on that.

Q. What was the name of it?

A. *Luong Preah Sarik*

Q. Was it in the countryside?

A. Yes. I never saw it. One of my uncles became a monk until he died. He was a monk since he was young.

Q. Was he killed under the Khmer Rouge?

A. No. He was sick and died.

Q. Did you know him?

A. Yes. I know him very well. We always go to the Pagoda there. It was quite far, like 1 mile. We also had a Pagoda very close to our house, maybe 2 minutes walk. You can see it from the house. We have a very close connection with the monks that are there. Most of the time everybody sick or everybody don't need to do the folk chant and they always go to the Pagoda. Or someone get married we go to the monk listen to the folk chant.

Q. Did you feel when you were growing up that your family was very religious?

A. Yes. It was very religious.

Q. Some people belong to a church or a faith that they don't practice the religion. Does your family practice Buddhism?

A. You see, that is different. I think religion here is different than Buddhism. Like here, you have to put your name, commitment to do this or that, but in Cambodia, the Pagoda, as far as I know, you don't have to make a commitment that you have to stay there overnight or this and that in order to be a good religious. You go to a place for free, no request for payment, and you can dump all of the things to the monks and the monks will take care of it. If you get made, you can talk to the monk. If you need a fortune, you can go talk to the monk. You need flour, you go to the monk. So you really don't have to explain that. I am very commitment to the religion. You always knew that the Pagoda is the place that you ask for help. My mother's aunt went every holiday and new year. Very often we ask the monk to come to our house. Since my sister died, everyday we made the food for the monk. This was so the monk could pray and we believe that my sister would receive the food. Also, every morning at 6:00 we usually get up early and cook rice. Sometimes we cook the food and sometimes we don't. The monk will come and stand right in front of your house and you give it to the monk.

Q. Do you still do this? Do you still follow your religion in this country?

A. No, because I think that Pagoda is too far. And, again, you work all the time so it is kind of hard to follow completely. You do the best you can.

Q. Do you have a little alter in your house?

A. Yes. I do. We have a Pagoda in Danbury, which we almost lost it. The people kept fighting they didn't know who run. And now he run and... the person of the Pagoda and the other Cambodian he have a master's degree and CPA and he was a very nice man, very operative. Even I promised him to do the tax exempt so they could receive the money for the people. We just met them yesterday. They want me to be aboard the Pagoda. I said I cannot do it. If I can, I will say yes. But I refused it. Anyway, they were very grateful about that. I would like to do something that the people cannot do. I would do it for them. If somebody could do that, I say let them do it.

Q. Are you tired. How was so far?

A. So far, it's good.

Q. It's different that you have expected or the same.

A. I talk to *Bang Svang* already, I told her, Oh, she said you think maybe by the end too much tired and upset. But I do upset if you ask me to interview the first year or second year I came I would be able to say a word. But now I have to be share my experience, I'm quietly opened.

Interview 4 - Part 2

Q. How did you meet your husband?

A. I met him and I did not realize who he was. I didn't realize where he comes from, because I have no idea about him at all. Because he comes from another part of Cambodia. I think he was very educated. He has a friend which is American and usually I talk with American friends a lot. And finally, he came to talk to me, how are you, bla bla bla and whenever he traveled he did bring me a flower, but I just don't know, and then he said: do you speak English? I say oh, not a lot, only very little and he say; do you want to learn English and I say of course I want. But I didn't know how much I have to pay him for teaching me. And then he say well, the fee will come later; see if I have the time. And he come to teach me English which you know my mom's there my sister was there. He came not with me alone; and he taught with me for I don't know how many weeks. I didn't realize he had an eye on me or not, I don't know, I didn't even bother to think about it. I think onetime he was calling me, and he start to cough; and I ask him what's the matter; are you feel good? He says my heart hurt. I say oh, it kind of click in my mind something must be going on, and I didn't say anything. And then he was very respected and very gentle. Finally, he expressed to me, he want to marry me, and we talked to my mom. But still, my mom doesn't want me to go out with him unless after I get married. But you know him and I really were in love with one another for 3 or 4 months and we get married. After I knew him for a couple of years, I was married in 1972 or 1973 or something like that.

Q. How old were you at the time you got married?

A. I was 22 or 24. But he's around seven years older --. After I married I come to live in Phnom Penh. He was working and I am not working, I stay home. I think he was very busy man too because he had a very high position with the Government. A lot of time he was meeting, he went out of the country to Japan, United States, and Thailand lot of time. I was kind of stay in Phnom Penh, most of the time that I was alone. My mother sent me a maid with her girl; so I have two maids and her daughter to stay with me all the time. My sister who's married stays close to me too and my niece who got married stayed close to me too, so I'm not really alone. Only like at night I would stay alone, but during the day my family always come and pick me up, go this and there. It's just like a dream it's not too much a long of history of my marriage. I think in 1975, he come to tell me he said he would come, he came. You should take all the pictures out of the house; because they saw my picture with you, they will definitely kill you. He always told that, don't depend on him too much; he say that now he alive and I strong. I have a lot of powers because of him, but if he die I have nothing. I become a very weak woman that can't even survive. So with him or without him,

I have to learn how to be strong to know how to survive myself. If he die or he's missing something I always know how to survive and not losing anything at all. April 13, I can able to team when U.S. send the airplane go right near the American Ambassador and a lot of people, some of his friends from the U.S. asked him to leave. But he say no, because the country is very important, he must stay. When he came, I think he went to *Kampong Som* for a mission and since then I didn't heard from him anymore. I heard now, yes when I was in the camp I heard but I think he was getting a long time separated from me. He's getting married again because he doesn't know he thought I died.

Q. You heard from him when you were in the camps, how did you hear, did someone send you a letter?

A. Well, I sent a letter too looking for him. I didn't even know that he was in the U.S. as a matter of fact. I sent a letter to one of his friends and then his friends give the letter to him; and he sent a letter to me from United States. He said he was getting married and apologized for that. So I have no feeling with him because I think that's life. Because how do I expect him to wait for me he didn't know I was alive or not.

Q. How many years were you separated?

A. Married in 1973, so 1975 April 13, I separated with him.

Q. He escaped to Thailand is that what happened?

A. I think that he was in *Kampong Som*. However, I never have a straight history from him. I think he escaped by boat because *Kampong Som* is a port. All the ship and the boats are there. Someone told me that he swam a mile to catch the ship.

Q. When the Khmer Rouge came in April your husband said to you: get rid of all the pictures, don't tell anyone you were married to me and then he left?

A. He was saying if he will warn me all the time, he say that if anything happened that he was not here. First thing you should take all the pictures and throw away.

Q. This was after the fall of Phnom Penh or before he said this to you and then he disappeared?

A. Before, he disappeared not intentionally because first his brother had to go there; But then his brother refused to go. He said; no I'm not gonna go and my husband had to go by himself. They want him to go to *Kampong Som*.

- Q. Why didn't your husband take you with him to Kampong Som?
- A. He doesn't know what the circumstances are, how bad how soon it was, he doesn't know. But before right after I get married with him, he wanted me to come to the U.S. He wanted me to come to study, but my mom doesn't want me to come. She say that wouldn't be right; you stay there your husband here. He told me I'm a very dangerous man because I work with the Government and the communist do not like me, and if anything happens I can not come back to pick you up and go together. I have to go where it is safe for me. Which I understand that.
- Q. Have you seen him since you have been in America, have you had a visit; where does he live?
- A. When I came I seen him, and I think he was very sorry about me, he was cry a lot and he told me that; I'm right in front of him, he say that he still cannot imagine how I can walk from Cambodia to the U.S.. Also, because in the camps, I work with the refugees a lot. He did not matter whether it was Vietnamese, Laos. All the refugees, I work to help save Cambodian people. A lot of people from the camp, they know me, they admire me all the time. I think, I don't know my husband even told me that a lot of the Cambodians who came to the United States and he always says that it's very rare that they don't know your name, they admire you a lot.
- Q. Do you think he heard your name before the letter, did he hear about your reputation before he received the letter?
- A. No.
- Q. Then after word he hears your reputation. Is he married and he has children?
- A. No
- Q. He is not married.
- A. Yes, he has children. I think it is
- A. Too short
- Q. Too short, what do you mean? Is it like a dream?
- A. It is not long enough to begin to have a life together. We spent very little time together.
- Q. The way you tell your story, were you disappointed about all this?

- A. Yes of course I'm disappointed, but I think yes my husband they do that, and I'm very disappointed but I have to think about the circumstances. If he betray me not because of the war, I really would be very seriously mad. The other thing, no. If I put all my energy to get mad with my husband that he was married again then I could not help my family that needs me so bad, they the one who I come and see them since the first day, so them the one who... And I always remember my mother say that, if the man do not fit with you, and do not do the way you want, not fair with you, let him go. You just know them for a couple of years, 3 or 4 years, but your mother, your parents, your family is with you all along. So that's a very good lesson that she gave me.
- Q. What is the expectation of the wife towards the husband in a traditional sense. Should you have expected him to try to have found you? Some men did; others did not.
- A. Different kind of men, and different kind of thinking. My husband is very educated, also, he was very involved with the government. When you put your mind toward that, that is a very important part, that your mind have to keep busy all the time. He always talk to me, I was very worried about our country, I was very worried about our people. His mind just wanted to help the country and the people so bad. I'm his wife, he says; please understand, he say that; just allow me to do that because sooner or later your name is going to spread just like a fragrance of a flower. I'm his wife sometimes I'm very disappointed, I think I'm married with him that's all I want. He is to be with me not to get involved with anything else.
- Q. That doesn't explain why he would find another wife after coming to this country. Why didn't he look for you?
- A. But, he came before me.
- Q. Some Cambodian men looked years to find their wives.
- A. But a lot of people when they are depressed, they have to have something with them. A lot of time in Cambodian way, if you in love with somebody it's very hard for you to split, not like the Western society. If you in love with, I'm sorry to say prostitute, you can come and go, but if you had your eye or the woman had the eye on you from the good family, I mean that's gonna be hard for you to take off. I didn't mean that I didn't get upset. The past couple of years really wore me out. But, no, my mind clear, say you know I have to make my new life and the important thing is I help my family; my own people and I will go get more education as long as I'm alive.

- Q. Do you think of getting remarried again? Can you legally or do you have to get a divorce?
- A. Oh, I divorced already, I'm legally divorced. I'm the one who make the divorce paper. Because I think that no he's married, I don't want maybe next time he say hey, you now my wife so you have to pay the bill for this, but I have no money for that. So I just get a lawyer and make a divorce so I feel free. But so far my mind I have not put energy to looking for somebody to get married this or that, not at all. In the future I cannot predict in the future what's gonna turn to me. But for right now, I am happy the way I am. I feel free to go and most things that I want, I have free time. I want to continue to get my education.
- Q. Are you in Graduate school or College?
- A. No, not yet but I was thinking this is maybe a dream, because right now I have very heavy commitment with my Khmer Health Advocates. But as soon as I can take myself off, I will work at my Ph.D.
- Q. It doesn't sound like a dream.
- A. My friend, Sina Biew, she says the same, I met Sina and she say that. She wanted to get an MD, I say; good for you. She say doesn't matter she's so many years old as long as you know, I like her a lot. I told her that I don't think I can get to MD, because it's gonna be very hard for me to get all back on, learn about science. But Ph.D., I know it's difficult, but I think my mind is set.
- Q. This is your childhood dream to become a doctor, nurse on caring for people?
- A. Yes, at home my family have been supportive, they saw me dressed like a medical person they got a kick out me.
- Q. We want to have some understanding of the traditional marriage. Could you tell us something about this. Every woman comes from a different Province, their stories are different about the ceremonies. Tell us a little about this, so we can understand the cultural setting. Let me give you an example. You already explained to us how you met your husband. There are certain questions Svang would have asked you; did you go to a fortune teller; was it arranged; did his mother and father have to go to your mother and father; did he have to go to his parents?
- A. During that time, his mother was away and was old, his father had already died. He came and talked to my mother and then we agreed and my mother goes to the fortune teller. My mother followed the old tradition way she is not happy about my decision. I think she thinks I haven't talked to him already. She thinks she

- Q. can't stop me, I would of stopped too, because I always listen to her. He asked you mother and father? What did your parent think of him.
- A. The traditional way is that you see a woman, and you don't talk to her first. But during that time, the civilization had changed a little bit, not like my older sister, that's different. She cannot blame me to much either.
- Q. Did you have the proper attitude? As a young Cambodian girl did your mother and father feel you had the proper attitude. What does that mean when they say a young girl has to have a proper attitude?
- A. It means the way you behave.
- Q. Your mother went to the fortune teller, what did the fortune teller say?
- A. I think the fortune teller say what is not true. They say that we will become a lovely couple. And everybody say my husband and I always want to give something and that part is true. Because he is a very nice man, easy going, something like that, and so am I. I never go to somebody and look around and ask for this and that. We just want to sit around and have a good time and talk. And he is very good to my family, my parents, my sister.
- Q. How well did you know him before you got married? Did you think this is the most wonderful man?
- A. I think 5 months the most. I come from the countryside, I am very innocent so if someone talk nice to me, I say that, you are very nice. I did not fool around with the other men before so I look at them and say you are very nice.
- Q. So you were like a country girl, and he was a big city man, and you were very impressed.
- A. Yes. In a countryside who gonna give you a flower. So he always did. He was western with a lot of civilization. It just shocked me, I am from the countryside. I am very countryside.
- Q. He spoke all these languages, 5 languages?
- A. He spoke Chinese, Cambodian, French and English but I don't know the other. So most of the time, I feel like it is nothing too much talking about married life. It was not long enough for me to feel the loss. I have to put my family picture in front of me.
- Q. You mean you had to keep your family first, even after you got married. Can you

describe the marriage ceremony?

A. The night before we have people cook for the guests and this and that until the morning. We have the monk come to give us blessing and then we wear traditional Cambodian clothes. I think we had over 100 people, and my hometown came. During that time, I think my father he was getting very emotional because he loved me very much. And usually they have a priest to give you a wish, and my father say no, I have to give my daughter my wish because no one better than her father. So he came and gave me a wish. He would not let the monk give me a blessing. My father blessed me.

Q. What was his blessing?

A. He was blessing me and he was throwing the coconut flower, he throw it to me. He doesn't know how to give it to me and my husband. My poor father, he have a radio, other time when you have a radio you know you a big shot, and he keep all the time, he gave it too me. The radio was the wedding gift.

Q. What happens, is the wedding 3 days long, when does the wife and husband finally go off to there own house?

A. Well I think that depends I think 3 days. I think 1973, you have to watch out because it was not safe anymore and I think you want some people cut a little.

Q. Why is that you said it isn't safe?

A. The country is very depressed because of the *Khmer Rouge*. They think 3 or four days is too much.

Q. How does the traditional relationship, especially in the countryside, how does the wife prepare herself for the husband. All of a sudden you go from being a very young protective woman to having a husband, how do you make the mental change?

A. I am not clear about your question.

Q. How do you go from being a very protected young woman to all of a sudden having a husband, how to you prepare your mind for that?

A. I didn't prepare not really. I think now that I look back when you grow up young with your parents all the time and you get love from all your family. I think they give you more grow up. I am number 10 in the family, and 3,4, 5 my brother and sisters, and they get married already. How did they do it. Even though consciously I didn't want to do that but I see it everyday so it stick in my mind.

And I think 22, 23 is old enough to get married, and I in school a lot of time and I think that gave me a lot of confidence too. Also, I think my husband he was 7 years older than me, he's kind of more mature. I am not scared or that I didn't get along with my husband, my home is still my home.

Q. So it wasn't frightening for you to all of a sudden to become a wife?

A. I think the day before I cried. The next day I was fine. I think that the other thing my husband told me, he say that; we have to make deal, I will not do anything again or treat your parents bad and I would not want you to treat my mother without respect, if they do something wrong to you, I think we should discuss it before. I treat his mother more than my mother. If I go to Bangkok, I will bring her some clothes, something for her. My husband too before he leave the country, he always sit down quietly with my mother to give her money. Do you give your mother money; I'd say no; he says, give it to her. But I didn't give all to her, I just didn't tell him.

Q. You said your marriage was like a dream; why was it like a dream?

A. Because it didn't take too long, 2 years is like a dream had past. That is what I meant, it not too long to realize, not too long to have the experience of being a real husband and wife. That's what I mean about a dream.

Q. Would you say you were happy in the 2 years; were you a happy couple?

A. I can't say that I'm very happy or I can't say I'm very unhappy. It was just OK. Because I think when the husband not home often sometimes I feel disappointed.

Q. Would you say that you became friends, or you hadn't even had time to be good friends?

A. I can't say friends, we just didn't have too much time together.

Q. Do you think your husband had a hard time because he was traveling so much. Do you think this was a phase in his life, that he would stop traveling, or do you think this was his way with dealing with the marriage?

A. Oh I don't think this was his way of dealing with the marriage. But that his way, all his life, he like that.

Q. He put his career first, his wife second, his government job came first and his wife second is that right?

A. Yes. And he expected me to understand this.

Q. Have you ever experienced that with a Cambodian man before, because it sounds like that your family was the opposite? Did you know any Cambodian people like that, that were just into their careers?

A. I think that depends on your job. This is just an example; say that you have a husband he really gets involved with the politics, and how is he supposed to have time with me. But if you have a family not working, busy make more money, like that, you have more time with your family.

Q. As you look back now do you think you made a mistake marry a man who is just into his career or did you like that? Do you like a man who is very intense with his career?

A. No, not at all. But I think I was too naive, too sweet and innocent. But now I'd look twice. I'd tell him exactly what is on my mind. I'm not going to skip it. So, know I'd have to say everything on my mind if you like it or not.

Q. You didn't have children, is that right; was that your plan or did not have time to have children?

A. No. Well, I think I couldn't have children. Also, my family side, my mother had 12, my mother's aunt didn't have children, my mother give my own sister to her.

Q. What did you think about having your own family? Were you thinking about now I'm married now I will have 10 children or did you not want children?

A. Oh, I always wanted children. Because in Cambodia I think most people, when they get married, they intend to have children.

Q. Because the marriage was so short you did not have a baby.

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any part of the marriage ceremony that you remember with great fondness?

A. Well my nephew, they came a week before the wedding. I was just teasing them, and I say that; how you gonna give me a present and you took my whole family and come to my wedding. I was very grateful for them because they were very respectful to me and they just treat me very special during that time. My nephew-in-law, he lost his voice right before the wedding. And after that he say; because he sing to much at the wedding. After that my young sister, my old sister set a line like that so we could see the picture all of us. My older sister got

married after me. One year after, and during that time my brother-in-law, the husband of my older sister, I think, it seemed like he woke up from a dream. When he came to the wedding with my sister and after that he didn't be with us. He went to the Pagoda. He looked to the bone of his wife and he would cry and my mother couldn't find him until dark he would come home, and my mom would ask him it was a really sad part where he was and he would say that I was with my wife.

Q. The marriage brought back to him his own marriage.

A. But, not during my wedding but during my sister's wedding. Then my grand mother is very upset, but my cousin took a lot of flowers and them on the old people. This was my sister's wedding. Then my mother said, how can you do that to the old people.

Q. Do you remember for instance with your husband, was there any special memory that was wonderful?

A. I think after the wedding, we took a trip to Bangkok. I think we had a good time there. My brother-in-law was a pilot, he would fly an aircraft. So we would go with him. We went to stay with my husband's friend's over there, and then we drove to Bangkok and we went to the zoo, a lot of places. We go to have good food in a nice restaurant. Then a very famous Thai singer, he held the microphone, and sang around the table. He was very respectful around women, and he give a gift, like soap. I remember that and I didn't even bring my own clothes, I bought them at the store.

Q. What is the most difficult memory?

A. I think the difficult memory 1973, 1974, 1975 was unsafe time in Phnom Penh. My husband he goes out and have meetings, I would worry about him. I am very worried that he would get killed by the bombs. In the city every day and night in the morning you would find out how many got killed, this and that. It was depressing for me, so usually I stay awake until he would come home, and he told me that I shouldn't worry about him, he gonna be all right. That not true explanation why shouldn't I worry. If he not my husband I wouldn't worry, he can go overnight. I feel that he did not understand how much I cared about him.

Q. There was a lot of danger then?

A. Yes, it was very dangerous. I really don't know exactly. The U.S. send a lot of soldiers and they bomb, and they didn't even know about the Cambodians what part. They say they bombed 2 Vietcong, but a lot of Cambodian people got killed; the farmer who planted rice, those people moved to the city right in front of my

house, they stayed alongside the street.

Q. The American bombings were hurting Cambodian people?

A. Yes.

Q. It must of been a very difficult time for a young bride to go to the big city, and then to be in danger.

A. No, you live day by day, you never know when you get hit. The security in Phnom Penh was very difficult. They stopped the traffic and you cannot go, but my husband, sometime if I need to do something at night I go with my husband's nephew and I told them that; I was so and so wife, and then I could go through. But it was still very dangerous, but I kind of very brave at that time. It was very, very depressing at that time.

Q. Was there any special traditions in your family that were associated with marriage; did your family have special customs or traditions?

A. No, I think my family did what most people did.

Q. What thoughts do you have as you think back; where there any other thoughts that come into your mind?

A. I have an old picture that you know; do I have to look for the man, getting married. Do I interest this, that, I have no concern about that. I just don't know how to explain.

Q. I did not understand what you meant. You have no interest in a man?

A. I did not have that idea whether I should get married or not. I went along with my husband's wishes. I did not give marriage a lot of thoughts.

Q. Do you think it is a good idea for a young woman to jump into marriage without thinking about it? What advice would you give your cousin if she wanted to get married?

A. I cannot advise them too much, because I don't think each man would have the same problem or idea even though they would ask me. I could say from my heart what I think, you have to before you get married you have to talk, you have to talk to them. He if agree you have a good commitment go ahead. But not like me I didn't even plan what is gonna turn to me. Should I be soft to him; should I just love him and that I would be OK. So I had no idea. My mother never told about that. No one ever teach me about that. I just go on my own. Somebody asked me

so I am interested in this man because he this kind of person what do you advise. I say what do you want, what does he want from you? So you really have to sit down and talk and if you agree with one another than you should marry. Because I don't think that man and woman intentionally get married and hurt one another.

Q. How come it is for a young girl to just get married and try to be very loving, wonderful wife without having any idea of the situation; how often do you think that happens?

A. Well I think that the first time you married, you have a new experience because I think this country different. In Cambodia, marriage and sex is not discussed. You have to treat your in-laws with respect, you have to not betray them. But you be loyal to them, something like that. I think that your relative never express a warning about future, you cannot predict a future. Even though the other woman has an affair with the man, he still loves his wife more than her. I think 50% you try but 50% you believe that some kind of magic go through your life.

Q. How does the Cambodian woman deal with these contradictions: (e.g. here you are a young woman in a family with a grandmother who wouldn't talk to her husband because he had another woman). Doesn't the mother talk to the daughter about how men can sometimes not be that nice to their wives.

A. I think my mother says the man sometimes can be a pain in the neck but you should not put up with them if they give you too much grievance.

Q. Here is your grandmother who obviously had a very bad situation for herself. Isn't in a way like sending the lamb to slaughter by taking the young beautiful woman and just sort of sending her off to god knows what going to happen?

A. No. They very worried about me. Because a lot of men have asked to marry me. I think the first time, my teacher, I was 15 or 16 and I heard it even though I did not sleep in my own bed. I didn't even know my own bed, sometimes I'd sleep with my mother, sometimes with my sister. Then my aunt comes to talk with my mother and say you know her teacher, as a matter of fact that man just want to marry me. And you know I was very young, my mother say no I cannot give her to him, because she is very young. She say she didn't even know where her bed is, after being married 7 days, they gonna kick her out. But he never lost interest with me until one woman she's run off with him and after that he stopped. And the other man, he was kind of distant relative, he wanted to get married with me. But my mother say; well, you have to wait another two years because this year is not a lucky year. But she never expected me to know somebody's interest me. So when I would sit with her and make the massage, " you knew honey, you have to prepare yourself for marriage. When I was in high school, I think one student, he was kind of 3 or 4 classes above and he was in love with me very much too. I

think he came to visit my mother and she wouldn't let me talk to him; she say you go to cook and then when I come he asked very innocent, but my mother takes it serious; my mother was quiet but one word from her would go deep to your brain. She has a lot of roses, this and that around the house when she picked the flower. And he saw the roses so red and blooming, so pretty he asked my mother; you have a lot of flowers, do you ever sell sometimes. And she said no we don't sell, but we will buy some more.

Q. Did you find that when you were a young girl that you fell in love with any men?

A. I think, I don't know if I was really in love with them. A lot of the time, the professor, had an eye on me. I don't know why. One professor he say I look just like his mother.

Q. But you didn't find yourself falling in love with any men?

A. Not really, not heavy, I see them on and off, because I really don't know, it was confusing. And also my parents would not accept that. My mother always get mad with us because we have my niece, the stepdaughter of my grandfather. At home, we spoke French all the time, and made my mother angry. We did not want to hurt her, she would yell at us, she'd say you kids go to school just, give me a lot of gray hair. Because she cannot understand French. But he really didn't discuss anything about love, sometime just wanted to practice and talk.

Q. You speak about love in French so that your mother could not hear you.

A. Yes, but we did not , not.

Q. One woman said she didn't teach her daughter how to read and write, because she might send a love letter to a boy.

A. I think she must come from a very countryside. That still hold in the old system.

Q. Here you are now in America, do you have an idea of how you would arrange your next marriage? What are you looking for?

A. Well, for right now I don't think about that. But if I still want to have a family, maybe. I don't know you cannot predict the future.

Q. Are you trying to say that since you are all ready married once that's it you will never get married again, this would be the traditional thinking?

A. In Cambodia it seem you married once and you did not marry again, it seemed like you a very good person and you are admired by your family and society. But it

depends sometimes you need a husband and you have children. You need a husband so your family thinks that getting remarried is correct.

Q. In your case, you are saying you are just going to wait and see what happens, you are not planning anything?

A. No. I have no ideas. But whoever I get married this time, we will discuss it. I don't want to be unfair. I don't to betray, so I expect them to do the same.

Q. Do you want them to also accept the fact, that you may be a doctor? This is part of the deal.

A. I am not doing this for myself, this is being responsible. I think because I am Cambodian and I have my responsibility to help Cambodians the best way I can. If you not loyal to your own people, what does it mean to you.

Q. I heard from women, very talented, and very dedicated Cambodian women. That it is hard to find a nice Cambodian man who can accept that?

A. I think, I don't know it depends on age too. They might be younger than me. Of course yes, I think a lot of men back in Cambodia have a lot of power and more talent. I don't know about talent but they have more strength, more possibility to take care of the family. I think if they saw the woman who is well educated and talented, they just afraid if they just ask them they won't get married to them. And the woman, they have a feeling that well, but I never feel like that but I never say that I was young, that I was an attractive woman, I never think that way. The way I dress like in work in the factory I couldn't do that. But I don't dress because I want the man to look and be very attracted to me, I think that is wrong. In Connecticut, they were very concerned about me. They say why I am still young and don't get married. They try to say that I don't think any man is qualified for me. He would have to treat me with respect and I would treat him with respect. They say that you must feel lonely and this and that. But I am busy and I don't have time to feel lonely.

Q. If you find the right man can he slow you down?

A. I will never go down, he can never bring me down. The men would have to share. Now, back to the men who talk to me. I'm a bicultural person. I know I am not expert yet, but know when I go to the Cambodian society, I well behaved as a Cambodian but when I go to an American society I will give him a kiss, like something normal. Some of Cambodian man he told me that I will never get married with a Cambodian, I was Americanized this and that. I told him exactly to his face, that I am afraid you cannot love the tradition of Cambodia as much as I do.

Q. Have you had any men interested in marrying you since you have been living in Hartford?

A. Yes I do, but I refused. I don't think the man who asked me realized what he wants, he says that I should have a house and a husband and I should not work hard and I cannot hold the Cambodian country by myself. What do I think, without me Cambodia cannot work? He annoyed me. And then I told him: I say that, he wanted to know my salary, I don't think he had the right to ask me things like that. Before I talked soft, very sweet woman, now I like American system better some way to deal with the people; and also I find very powerful especially when you talk to the person who have maniac depressive if you talk Cambodian you can't finish with them unless you shortcut and very firm. Then I said no, I do not have time. They watch me, they say: where do you go, are you busy, can I talk to you. And I say you can talk to me on the phone. And I don't have time to meet you. He says no, he wants to talk to me face to face. I don't know, I don't care if you say I am crazy or what, but that's my decision. Again he keep calling me again and I say: you know if you have a problem if it is a problem I can help you with yes, but it is not my job, I will refer you to someone else and please do not disturb me. And when I come home I expect to be relaxed and I don't want any phone calls to bother me. I say that if you want to talk to me call me at the office. He thought that I was very rude. He says that never a Cambodian woman talk like that to me. I say that this is a Cambodian woman in the United States.

Q. You have changed.

A. Yes, I have changed.

Q. Any last comments you would like to make?

A. Well I think I cannot think right now. I work very hard. For myself I want to stand for Cambodian people, I think a lot of time the way I talk would not meet the Cambodian expectation. They would expect me to talk like a Cambodian person, very lovely, and sweet but to hold back, they never express openly to the people. But for myself I try to talk to the people I say that: doesn't matter whether you were a slave before or a farmer, or were not educated but you belong to the Cambodian country as much as anyone else.

Q. Your grandmother and your mother, they held back, they had a lot of feelings about things but they held back, and for some reason you are different?

A. Yes. I think my mother must feel very upset about my grandmother. I think the more you hold back. The more you not talk, nobody will know about you. You've got to express your feelings, that's the only healthy way, because when you

go home you can sleep well. If you don't talk, if you hold back, you keep hurting yourself. You should not abuse yourself.

Q. You keep the pain inside you.

A. I don't know this comes from working with the people or I learned from Dr. Niles or maybe somebody in my family openly spoke out. When I talk with a client doesn't matter they are all very educated, I feel free to talk as if they were my friend. I am a therapist, you are my client I have to talk exactly on my mind, you don't like me you don't have to come. I'm sure a lot of people don't like me, but some people would say that they admire me, Cambodian people never told you that, but I think you have to put a negative way with a positive way. And a lot of people come to me to say that: I admire you, you are a very strong woman and all the men in Connecticut want a strong woman like you. Some Cambodian women they call me and they say that I was wrong when I came, I worked so hard, my boss and they never gave me a break. They always want more and more, I get pain. I just want to ask you how can I get to school and get an education, I say that: great that's I can help you.

Interview 4 - Part 3

Q. When the communist took over the country, what did they do to the people?

A. I think April 16th in the middle of the night it started in Phnom Penh center of the city. We had a lot of scaring because we heard a lot of gun shot and a lot of people, especially the people who escaped from the countryside to the Phnom Penh, they really have no house that they feel like they could be safe and they was to get out from their house. Everybody who have a good house to stay with so they could be safe. April 17, 1975 at 9:00, I think I saw my brother he came back, he all sweat, he say that the communist going to come and they are going to kick us from our house. And still we don't believe it. Again, we heard the radio announce that the communist took the country. This is not because we talk. After that, we all go up stairs because my house had a third floor. The first floor we rented and we stay in the second floor and third floor. They took a torch to the hospital which you see a lot of people run across the street, especially the military. They had no clothes on, because they thought that Khmer Rouge would be friend and they don't want to show their military uniform because they understood that the communist doesn't like the military. If they would see, they would kill. A lot laughed and some people you could see they met the family that lived here who they never seen for a long time they cry. At the same time, you would see the crying that the Khmer Rouge would point the gun to the people, ask for gold for watch, car, motorcycle, and they would say that, "Well, you use this a long time ago can I borrow to wear to use it for awhile? I will return." If it was just food, they would never return. Or if you hesitate to give up, what they ask, you will trick to kill or hit from the Khmer Rouge. A few hours later you can see the people facing him have a lot of fear and they go to crop the rice. I think during that time, they have a little bit sense what is going to turn out to be. Those people go to crop the rice from the storage and you can see a lot of blood flow from their face and cry and scream and yell and gun shots still. I was very scared. I was still upstairs with just a TV. You could see a lot of Khmer Rouge with the black uniform. They drove a lot of cars, trucks, into the hospital. You can see that some didn't even know how to drive the car before. By noon, I heard the microphones announce that everybody in the city had to move out in 24-hours, because the Khmer Rouge was going to clean up all the enemy. After 3-days you could come back to stay in your home and your house. Again, they mentioned that you don't have to take anything of your belongings, because you are only going to go away for 3-days and you will return. Just go with your one outfit, that is it. During that time, we still hesitate, a lot of people still hesitate to leave their house because they think some idea that they cannot come back and some believe that they may come back. Finally, a lot of people get out from their homes and I forgot what day. I don't know if it was a Monday, Tuesday or Thursday, I forgot but a lot of people working so the Khmer Rouge would have to

point a gun to them to get them out from their home. So they had to go and they separate with their family. Of course, I mentioned some go to work and some they go to the market. It was still early yet. I think by 2:00 you can see the people a lot of people, thousands and thousands of people, you can't even walk, because there was no place to walk. The people didn't have anything. They had only a small bag or bicycle and some would have a car. You can see alongside the street, a lot of people have only a short pants and they would tie it with a string. You could hear the Khmer Rouge say that you can't move. If you move, you will get killed. Also, you can see a lot of body along side of the road. Some swollen. Even though we've been pushed out of the city, but a lot of people didn't not realize what is going to be next, you really don't know. Until the late afternoon, a lot of people realize that we cannot go back to their home. They cannot go back to their home anymore. They would start to cry again. The people who have a high position in the government most of them try to change the outfit they with you, the clothes, like the farmers use it to put around their next. Still everybody looks very scared. I think if you were with the high government and you have a lot of money, you usually have an easy life, even though you try to dress very poor, but your face still doesn't look poor as you want to. I think around 7:00 or 8:00 it was getting a little bit dark so a lot of people try to stop along side the street so they could rest or they want to spend overnight. During that time, they realized that they didn't have too much rice or food with them, they feel very hungry by then, they didn't even have pot to cook. When they saw the houses around there, they will go there and take some pot or plate as they needed. Each house had no people in it at all. They all left before we came. While you were eating you could hear the Khmer Rouge Soldiers come and talk very strong to the people. They say that, "You got to move fast to continue your trip until far enough from the city so you won't be hurt." The people tried to move their belongings a little bit and some you could hear that they would cry, scream, because some of their members would go to bring water or see this and that because it is still confused. When they pushed to move again, they were very worried that those members that they have with them could all stay together or what. At the same time, they were to realize that money won't be useful anymore. During that time, I think one family, I didn't see directly with my eye, but one of our friends told us that the family was very rich and they brought a lot of money with them. They drove a car to the river and they all got killed. That is why after that they knew that the money was not useful anymore.

Q. They committed suicide?

A. Yes. The whole family. I'm trying to think.

Q. How many thousands of people were forced on that march out of the city? Was it the whole city?

A. The whole *Phnom Penh* city.

- Q. The whole *Phnom Penh* city was just forced out?
- A. Yes. The people who did not go out as they forced out, after the communist killed them. A lot of people, people who have high jobs in the government during that time, as I know, were killed too.
- Q. What did you feel at the time? Were you alone or with your husband?
- A. I was alone.
- Q. You were alone, all by yourself?
- A. Yes. By myself.
- Q. You were in this thousands and thousands of people walking outside of the city?
- A. OK, I'm not alone even though my husband not with me. I'm with my sister and my niece and her husband and her husband's friends, my mom, and brother and his family, and my sister she was alone, no she with her husband to. We have I think three cars together. First time we were all in the car and drive very slow. I think I remember that I took one bottle and filled it with water. I just afraid that some of the kids will be thirsty, and my mom, she was quite old too. She was in her sixties. It was very hot in the day from 12 to 2:00. After that, I think we ran out of gas, so one car stopped and we had only 2-cars. During that time, the men had to walk. Only the driver and the women and children sit in the car. When we go far, another car run out of gas again. We had one car just to put my mom and the little children and the adults walked. That night we stayed in some place. That was before we passed through *Kien Svay*. This was the road from Phnom Penh to Vietnam. We spent the night there. I felt sorry for my niece because she is a very pretty even she had 2 or 3 children. Even though she would dress like everybody else, it wouldn't change her look. Also her husband and even though her kids you can tell that they do not come from the poor family. She will have a hard time because she usually just stay in a comfortable of her house and she cannot sleep without a mattress. So she has to collect a lot of grass to put under blankets so she could sleep. After that, I think that we stay in the house that have nobody we went through *Kien Svay* and we stay altogether and the Communist would give us some rice like each one can of sweet milk so we all bring it home and cook together. We don't have food. We only have rice. We would eat the rice with cucumber, vegetables and salt and that's all. During that time I was a very shy. I never saw people have malaria. They were shaking. It was just amazing to me that it is a very strange sickness. My nephew, the little baby, he was very sick. He had diarrhea and he had fever and which we have no medicine at all. During that time we saw one gentleman and he would say that he was a nurse before and he come to help give the modern medicine to the baby. After that, the baby feel better and he never think that the baby could be alive the way he looked, how sick he was. During that time we have a lot of discussion around my family and the woman who live with my family, the maid, we had one

with us and she act very rude. Not like use to be before. She say I'm going to go, and we say that; could you stay here for awhile and she say no and she just walk away. During that time, my family was discussing that who was gonna go to where because we realize a lot that the communist gonna try to kill a lot of people especially the people who work with the government, the rich people and the educated people and I was very worried about my brother-in-law and my nephew-in-law because my brother-in-law he was commander of aircraft in Phnom Penh. My nephew-in-law was commissar in *Pursat* Province.

Q. Where you worried about your husband, did you know where he was?

A. I had worried before, when I think April 13th, I had a lot of worry about him and I gone everywhere, go to ask a lot of his friends even though that time in Phnom Penh they would stop the traffic they did not allow the people walk in the street at all. And I just go ahead and walk through. Yes I was suffering a lot when my husband left because my mom, when she came to the second floor, she would see me alone and I kind of collected all my clothes and I thought I would take the last airplane and get out of the country. But again, I was thinking that I have my mother who came from the country to stay with my sister and with me, also, my sister with the children there so I have a lot of hesitation but finally, I was thinking that I have to go. So I pack up the suitcase and I go to the place that have a helicopter who came to pick up the people who came from another country who lived Cambodia before. But they don't have a place available, they would say that that they all filled, so I have to come back home with my friend. When I come home I think my mom she just make me feel more sad because she say that usually I never sad most of the time, this time I have no smile on my face anymore, and again she don't want me to go and again she don't want me to stay, but finally I have no choice and also my brother-in-law he should about know of Cambodia, but doesn't either, nor my husband. One day he came home, he say that you should get out from the country, and next day things changed, well what is the matter and he say I don't want to get out from the country because I want to be here, it doesn't matter the communist was in or out, I rather stay here in my country. My brother-in-law, he came, he would take a few days off to stay with his family and that is why we got stuck together. I think if he know, he would pick all of us in the airplane and get out of the country. I am gonna back up to talk about who decided to go where and why. My niece and her husband because he was commissary and I'm sure that he made a lot of bad things, abused people, something like that too, and I was afraid that he want to go to Vietnam because I think he spoke Vietnamese a little bit and also before his older brother he was a *Khet* leader in *Svay Rieng* province so he was kind of very familiar with that part. And then he say that. Well we gonna go past in *Svay Rieng* and *Neak Leung* to Vietnam. I would talk to them, I would say that; no you can't do that because the Vietnamese most of them they were like Cambodia, because I remember, the late 60's something like that, we pushed the Vietnamese out of the country, it was very traumatizing, a lot of Vietnamese get out of the country, they

left beautiful home, or they sell very cheap. I'm sure some Vietnamese want revenge, too. Finally, I suggest, I say you should go back to the West so you could pass our hometown and go through Thailand and get out of the country, and they would take my idea. My niece she would cry a lot. She came to say goodbye to my mom and the whole family and she say that; she won't have a chance to see us again, especially I think she have a very strong bond between me, I think because I have my children from my young sister, but I feel I am very strong, I will go out and talk to the people and do the exchange, which I do very well, I never die that before. But everybody gave me something, so I brought it and we all ate it together. And also my niece and I we have a similar favor we drink coffee all the time, we like to go out and have coffee, that is very hard to get coffee during that time. That's why she kind of too very heavy emotional towards me and my mother too, because she love her very much. And finally, they left with their friend's family, so now I have only my mom, myself, my brother's family and my sister's family together. And again, we can't even stay in that house, we've been forced out again.

Q. When you were forced out of Phnom Penh, your mother was with you?

A. Yes, my sister she was pregnant, so my mom she ways very good like that.

Q. When the Khmer Rouge came to Phnom Penh, your mother was in the house, your sister, her husband and children. Your father was still in the village, and then they forced you out into the countryside, so you went out together as a group?

A. Yes.

Q. When you got to the countryside, what happened, how many days were all these thousands of people marching into the countryside?

A. I didn't have a chance to hear what the other people say but myself I think just on the road they have a one day stop, and then next day another stop, but still not finished yet.

Q. After the second stop, what did they send you to these camps?

A. After the second stop, you still have no idea what they gonna do to you, you have no idea at all. They say that; you have to move from this house, they always threaten you that, they afraid that the enemy is gonna be that far so you won't be safe, and again, they say to you that; if you not gonna go as soon as they told, they would shoot you.

Q. When the people were marching out of Phnom Penh, were they killing the people?

A. I didn't see that, the people who I saw were dead already and the people who they would tie with the thread along side the road too.

Q. How old were you during this march?

A. In late twenties.

Q. They forced everyone out of Phnom Penh, you were marching out of the city, all around you your seeing people who are dead, what did the communist do to all these people?

A. When I passed, sometime you didn't have a chance to see alongside too much either because when you see the marching people, sometime you are in the middle. You can't even see what is going on alongside, but you see the old people who have been pushed, or handicapped they couldn't walk and then the family would take them because they were too tired, they would drop them off right in the middle of the road, that was very sad to me. On my mind I was thinking how these people have food to eat, a lot of them stay, and how the communist would do it to them, I have a lot of questions about that. After they've been pushed from the house that I stayed with my family, we have to walk again and we walked through the forest and we stay in the small forest, with a lot of people there, you sleep right on the ground, you have no roof over your head at all. We take the leaf of a banana, to cover to protect from the rain. My sister, she still have a baby, around 3 months old. So in Cambodia, the custom of Cambodia, the small baby, they avoid to get out of the house too far to the forest, because they believe that the baby still on a watching of their spirit mother, they have a spirit mother, so that is why when you see the baby sleeping, sometime when they are sleeping they smile or they cry, in Cambodia they believe that because their spirit mother been teasing them because they love them very much, that's why usually when the baby smile, the old people will use their saliva to put in their front head, so they say that the spirit of the mother won't like them and they won't tease them anymore. When we stay in the forest, I think for a couple of days, during that time, I remember that we will take some of our clothes to exchange with the fish so we would have something to eat. I think three days in the forest, the *Khmer Rouge* came again with the gun, they would point to everybody and say; you have to get out from this place and move again, otherwise you gonna get killed. And after that they just do the gunshot just to make everybody so nervous, we have no cart anymore that was the end. So now I have to carry some of the belongings especially, the baby of my young sister, she not breast feeding, she used the bottled milk, so it was very difficult because our milk did not last too long. The baby would not want to have breast feeding at all, the baby just refused, even though you push them they don't like it, it is difficult to see the baby suffer from that.

Q. So you ran out of food for the baby, what happened to the baby?

A. The baby died, starved to death. But during that time, he not die yet. What happened when the communist forced the people again and during that time again I think everyone out of energy, especially Cambodians have a very relaxed family,

and the old people are 80 or 90 years old and they cannot afford to take them in. They put them right in the middle of the forest, and then just give them the rice, one bowl of rice and a glass of water and they say goodbye. So I can imagine during that time a lot of old people died. We have to cross the river to the other side, my brother before the fall of the country he was working the other side of *Phnom Penh* and he kind of know a lot of people there and some of the people he used to work with before were communists, so they kind of knew one another, and my brother introduced my brother-in-law to them, this is my brother-in-law and they asked him what he doing before, he say that he was a pilot, blah, blah, blah. And then they give him a special car, identity, and they told him everywhere that you go, if you ask for food they will give you food, if you ask for a ride they will give you a ride, it is no problem, and they will give more attention to the whole family. But see we were still confused, so my brother-in-law, he just like a jerk, he doesn't really smile too much, he was brought up in a family where he never had to do any hard work either, so he had no experience completely. He was quite happy that, still a lot of people considered, give me a special I. D. so I could have this and that. Even though he was worried but we were grateful with him because he always brought food, he can go every where he wants. He stayed with one family, and he's kind of old and his wife too. Those people are very generous and the people live alongside the river and they do a lot of fishing and they would keep the fish through year to year to eat, at home so you could eat from year to year without worry. They pick all the fish and they give it to my family, and sometime you don't have the food, to tell you the truth, I stole it. I would go to steal the fish when they not home, steal a few fish for my mother. A few days later, her fisher man's husband was missing, she didn't even know where, he was kind of the Mayor in that town before the fall of the country. I just have a awful lot of questions, I couldn't figure out what way and I talk with my brother-in-law, I say; well I think if they will send you to Phnom Penh you have an airplane, you just tell them that you want whole family go to visit and then we can go to the airplane and get out of the country. Which is almost like too silly to think about that, but that was my idea too.

- Q. Where they tricking you brother-in-law because why would they give him a special card if he had worked for the government?
- R. Well during that time, I have a lot of confusion. Half of me thought that well maybe they need him to trade, and the other hand, I think that, they think that they not gonna give him a chance to live to long, so they might as well treat him special.
- Q. Why do you think they gave him the card now as you look back?
- A. I think they gave the card so easy for them to keep track where they are, so if they plan to do something they could do easily. I think and then we move again, but before we move we give a lot of history to them, they would have a conference, a meeting, monthly. Besides, every day at night, after you come back from work, they have a meeting, like one hour with a group 10 or 20 people, and monthly they have

a big meeting so a lot of people come and they ask you name and they ask who you are, and where do you come from, do you have a family.

Q. By this time, where you already resettled into a camp?

A. Well I'm resettled but I am not quite sure, I'm still in the process yet, I still don't know where they gonna force me to go next.

Q. Was your family sleeping on the ground, in the jungles?

A. That time no. That time we were living in the house with the fisherman family. I also met my cousin, which he was a military, a commander, he was married to a French woman and then during the vacation the French woman went back to France for vacation, he had I think two children, which I never tried to locate them though. Then he's married with another woman or girlfriend I don't know, I saw him very quick and next day one of the people that know him told me that they saw his body float in the river, so I am sure he was killed. It was amazing during that time, you take the bath up the river, if you go to feel on the ground you find all the skeleton, the head of the people, it was amazing. And then we left, we say goodbye, we ask the communist leader there, he still very nice to my brother, I think that is what makes you think some communist, I'm not saying the communist are good but some they still have a lot of sense of humor, and by not wanting to be a communist, why want to help the people. They let my family go and then we all walk to the other place, when we go to the other place, those families my brother had known before too, and one girl in that family, she was a policewoman, I met one lady who she had two children and her husband was a military, work with the U.S. Government and she spoke Vietnamese, I got very close to her, all the time her and I would go down to fishing, we would go into the water, sometime a half-day to catch a few fish for my family. One night, and then we asked that place if they would allow us to stay they say no, we have enough people so you cannot stay, but you have to go back. So I know that we cannot stay there anymore, but one night, it was very scary for me, I was sitting downstairs and it was very dark, and those places, each house they have a lot of banana trees, so at night it looked very dark, so when the people come put through the banana tree, you hardly know that the people walk through that, somehow I saw the cigarette light, and I knew somebody was there but at night when you wear the black dress you cannot even see the people, all you see is the light, and for a short time that man show up, he would have a black uniform with a gun, and would talk firm to the family, he would say that; where is the woman named so and so, and they say yes, they say that *Angkar* want to invite her to have a meeting, and her brother say that; would you please wait for a few second, she gonna take some of her mosquito net in which she has to sleep there, but that man say to the family that; we don't need the mosquito net, the *Angkar* will take care of that, so just ask her to come as soon as possible. Since she get out of the house, that night she never come back, everybody get the idea that she was killed. But the people didn't have a clear idea because, I didn't see the communist killing in front of

me, so I cannot say exactly that these people were killed or not because I did not see the body.

Q. Someone once told me that the communist didn't kill in front of other people, the whole time you were under the communist did you ever see them actually kill someone in front of you?

A. No, but they would say something very cruel or threaten, but kill in front of, no. But I could hear, they kill but never, well, yes I saw, but not close, maybe 50 meters from me I saw them kill.

Q. This woman who was taken away in the banana field, you were watching this?

A. I tried to say that each house they plant a banana tree behind their house. I stayed downstairs, it was very dark, I saw the whole thing. And after that we have to leave again because we were not allowed to stay there.

Q. Why was that?

A. Because they say they have enough people. During that time, we have to take a boat, the river it is not small. It was like the *Mekong*, it's kind of big river, so during the day when it is windy, it has a lot of waves, it is very scary. We crossed to the other side and walked through there and stopped somewhere, because mostly my brother know a lot of people on that side. So while we walking, I think it was 12:00 o'clock and most of time I can tell you how much heart was broken toward my mom, my sister's children because they were so little and my sister she gave one of her son's to me the older one, he was three years old. He was very hungry, he would cry the whole time and he can't even walk too fast, sometime we just have no way we could carry him, the longer you carry him the heavier he was. And he would complain and say that his feet get so tired and he doesn't know why and he was very hungry and he cried the whole time. Unfortunately, I saw that one house, they was making a lot of food for the monk, so they was waiting for the monk to give the food to the monk. See, it's from one area to another area, it's a little bit different because some area if the commander took completely things change very fast and some kind of take more time, a few months later. So they still have a little bit freedom to do what they usually done. So that place, I feel very sorry for him and my son, so I go to ask the place, I say that; can I have some rice, a little bit, and then the old man asked me where I was from, I told him what part I come from and it was a coincidence, he knows my uncle, my mom's cousin, he say oh I know him, so and so, he was very kind man, I never forgot. It was my uncle he was a very kind man, when he died, even though he have no blood family there, but the whole town came and cry and it expressed to everybody how good he was, he was very, very good man.

Q. So this man was a monk?

A. No, he not a monk, he was just a man in the neighborhood. He would hold my hand and say; just ask them, they shouldn't be cruel not giving the rice to your son, when I go there and I ask them; can I have a bowl of rice for my son because he is very hungry and he cries all the time. And a lot of people say well; usually you have to eat after the monk came, or the monk eat, some people say; you can't do that, when you give something to feed the people who need right away, that is the most important. So a lot of discussion was going on, and finally, it was a strong decision that if this kid need the food we have to give him the food, that is the most important.

Q. What happened to the little baby, did they give you the rice?

A. I think those people, even though they not *Khmer Rouge*, but they was very close to the *Khmer Rouge*'s as soon as everything get settled they gonna become what you called old people and the people like me they call new people. So they give the rice and I bring to my mom and my son and we all eat and we continue. My brother-in-law he met some of the people who he had known before and those people had told him the communist are looking for him. They say that they need the people who, they need the pilot so that they can train the other people so they can use the aircraft. He got very excited, he said; I have to go. So we went back to the same place were we stay the second stop, the one that I told you the communist had known my brother, the fisherman's place, we stay in that place again. And after my brother-in-law decided to go back to Phnom Penh, after talking to his wife. Then they said goodbye, and left. So now I have only my brother and my sister and my mom and one of my nephew who is in medical school, that was his mother who was in home town, so when he finishes his bachelors degree he come to live with me, he studied to become a doctor. And when my brother-in-law left.

I almost forget to mention to you that when I was in Phnom Penh, I went to visit my mom's home and the old lady who usually comes to collect the rest of the rice that we didn't eat all and we keep for them and they take it to feed the pig. She always come to collect, and she bring the little girl, she is around 6 years old, and I would ask her, where is her mother, and she told me that her mother had died and her father married another woman and they was very cruel to her, now she took her grand daughter to stay with her. During that time, I was thinking that, I want to adopt her, and because she was poor I just want to give her some money because that wouldn't be fair if I didn't give her anything and I asked her if she wanted me to adopt her and what would the father say, and the grandmother would say; oh no, he doesn't care about her anymore, if you want to adopt her fine, but would you give me some money and I say: yes. And she asked for 30,000 *Riels* that time, and I give it to them and she was living with me, but that kid until now, what I recall she must have a lot of abuse, traumatize because she is a very tough kid, like she have something inside herself that the very angry, very secret, that she cannot look innocent like a usual kid. So I took her and I would give her a bath and cut all her

fingernails and washed everything, during that time, my dad was teasing me, he would say that; this is my god because I would never give him a bath but I would give her a bath, but I didn't care about that and I took her to Phnom Penh to stay with me.

Q. This is your god, what does that mean?

A. He was teasing me because the Cambodians, think parents as gods.

Q. This child was with you all this time?

A. Yes, she was with me through this whole experience, but she give me a lot of gray hair. I just want to back up a little bit. When she was living with me, I have the maid who cook and clean all the time for me, because she know this kid is my daughter, even though she is 6 years old, she still hold her and feed her, but I don't care about that, I think that that was fair. But my mom was a little discouraged with me, she say you cannot do that to the kid, 6 years old because they gonna getting bold and you gonna have a tough time with her. And all the time she jealous with me, all the time that she came next to me she always looking to my ring, my necklace, she say that so pretty, and I asked her where do you want to sleep, and she say; I want to sleep in your bed, that kid was amazing. At six years old, she talked like an old person, I think she wanted to go home, and I feel sorry for that part she want to go home. And my mom say; well you have to go to the airport, fly again to go home and she say; yes but you don't have to go with me the whole way, just drop me at the airport with me, I will find the way out.

Then after that, I am gonna back up to the time. She would never smile, she looked sad all the time, one communist family, they had no family at all, and they liked her very much, and because she was blacker than all my family, and she didn't look like one of us, the communist said this is not your daughter, she not look like you at all, so we want to take her from you. And we have no choice, and they took her, so we lost her completely. And then we stayed at the fisherman's house for a few months, and then the communist asked us to build our own house. So we go to build our own house and live together, so my brother and I we just live together except we just put the wall to block the 2 houses, we could see one another. But my brother would get confused during that time, he was kind of became jealous with me and my sister, as a matter of fact, when my brother-in-law left my sister was pregnant, I didn't even know the whole thing. I thought that she have some disease, she didn't even know either (I missed something...). Before we go to build the house, the baby got very sick because we run out of the milk, so we try to make a rice water for her and then he ate that, his belly became swollen and achy and he cried, and his skin got very dry, and he got very thin. Finally, I go to ask the woman who have the baby because my sister's breasts had no milk anymore because she never used it for her baby and it dry out, so I go to ask the communist leader, she had a baby, she very compassionate to the baby, she say that; bring to me and I will feed him and she fed

him but he won't take it, he just squeezed his head as hard as he could and the more she put her nipple to his mouth and he threw up and gargled the whole time, so finally, we take him home and a few days after, he got very sick and he was die, I didn't know he was dying because he didn't make stools or urinate for almost one day so his belly became bigger and bigger, and when I feel his body it was no temperature in it at all. When I hold his hand, he just don't want, he just keep squeezing me harder and harder, and then I would run out to ask people if I could have some palm sugar so I could boil it and he could drink it. And while I went there, he was gone, he had passed away, that was the first time I was very, very shocked because since we leave *Phnom Penh* that was the first member of my family that I saw die of starvation. I was making a fuss over the baby, I was crying, complaining, I would go around to talk with the communist leader, I say that; my nephew die now, I need the wood to make a coffin for him, and everybody was laughing, they say; why do you make such a fuss about the baby, that all I have to do is dig the ground and throw him in. I say; no please because that wouldn't make me feel better at all, at least I would have some wood so I can make coffin for him. Finally, they give it to me, so the neighborhood came to help make the coffin and we bury him. So a month later, when the communist come to ask us all to make the house. And then back to the house that we built by ourselves and live together with my brother.

Back to Cambodia, publicly the men looked like he lead the family, because he worked hard, but the majority of Cambodian men even though they work hard the money always go to the wife. My brother, he didn't have a really good job that he make good money, he just had a reasonable job and reasonable living, he worked with the American bank and his wife didn't work at all and he have 3 or 4 children. My family is very close to *Aranhprathet* and my brother-in-law sometime he would go through, he would fly from Phnom Penh to *Battambang* and from *Battambang* to *Pailin*, and sometime if he want to take his family to my hometown and then go through *Aranhprathet* to buy some stuff and he would say that he was tired and maybe the airplane engine did not run too well, so he just want to take the day off. And we would buy, buy and fill the airplane back to *Phnom Penh*, and the last thing that we bought, food to keep because in Cambodian during that time, it's very difficult to get the food, if you do get it, it is very expensive because all the food is imported from one province to the other province by airplane, so the cost is very expensive. Also, we don't have a good rice in Phnom Penh, the rice was separate from the rice in China. Luckily my parents always send a big bag of rice all the time and they send to me. (Where was I...?).

Q. You were saying the baby just died.

A. My brother always came and even though I am there or not there if he need something like garlic or sugar he would take it, but I never think that he shouldn't do that to me, I think that what family was. And usually, like myself and my young

sister and my niece and if we buy something, the price we don't care as long as it is good and a lot, my brother he is very careful how he spends because he didn't make too much money. He was always teasing us that, because I think you have money that is always why you buy a lot of things, but I always split, if he wanted it he could take it. My sister-in-law, I think she is the one who really turned my brother, confusing him, I think she is very jealous with myself and my family.

- Q. When you were with the communist, was your sister-in-law the one who lost the baby?
- A. My sister lost the baby.
- Q. your talking now about your brother and sister-in-law, why are you telling us about them, are you trying to tell us about their relationship?
- A. What I am trying to say is I think the communist really changed the people's minds because of the starvation, can change from a human being to an animal, thinking.
- Q. How did the starvation affect your brother and sister-in-law?
- A. Well it affect him, like if he would have food, he would try to hide it only for his own family.
- Q. So you where are together, and he would try and hide the food from you.
- A. Yes
- Q. And his family was his wife, himself and his children. How many children?
- A. Three children
- Q. So on your journey, there was your brother, sister-in-law, their 3 children and your mother, and then there was the adopted girl also your sister and her baby and her child?
- A. No, she was gone and my nephew, who he studied.
- Q. So your brother would plant food and not give it to anyone else?
- A. Yes, he would do funny things like that and I was very discouraged. When I get food, I would think first of my mom and the small children, I think that is the most important.
- Q. Did you feel at this time, you were the one who had to lead everyone? Who was the leader of your group at this time?
- A. It seemed like my nephew, he was good too, but I think because he was my nephew, I always feel like I am the one who lead.

Q. Was your brother older or younger?

A. He was quite older than me.

Q. How come he wasn't the leader then?

A. This is when we split the family, he is with his family and we are with our family. The communist they count the head of family, if they want to distribute the food, you could go to take it. But because I have family before and my brother he has family so we separate into two families.

Q. But you felt the family should have helped each other?

A. Oh I feel like especially he is a man and he is older than me, I don't care if he don't take care of me, but I think that his obligation, he has to take care of my mom.

Q. And he didn't?

A. He didn't. Because he was my mom's favorite child and when we were young I always talked to my mom, I say that; that's your favorite child. But I think because that he was older and he had less money than the other, my mom feel very compassionate to him, which that fair. All the time that my mom was sick, I'm the one who run around to exchange this and that, medicine for her and every night that I come back from work my extra time I would go to carry the water because my sister was pregnant too, so I have to go carry the water for my mom to take a bath and my sister and they could wash the clothes there because from the house to the river it was very far too. My mom, I think she feel very sorry about me and sometime she say that she want to go to take a bath by herself, I say; no, too far I don't want to you to go because you are very tired by the time that you get there, she say; well I just want to take a walk. Once in awhile I would let her go, and again, I would bring the water from the river and give her a bath, brush her up, something like that. I think she always wishing me all the time. In Cambodia usually everybody keep talking, they always think that, I wish you would see seven colors, that means if the people see seven color that mean that the people who are very power, they are very special wishes. My mom would say; you are so good to me and in the future you are gonna see seven color, she keep wishing me, day and day all the time. And then for awhile I would get very confused with my brother, I would say; how can he do that to my mom, she is sick and he caught some fish and at least he could split some with her, a little bit. Believe it or not, I don't know how to do the rice, clean it at all, because my mom when she was little she always sneaking out from her home, go to do it, clean the rice, and she know all these things and was very helpful during that time, she do the whole thing. Because when I tried to do everybody kept laughing, she's the one who cleaned the rice all the time, but I learned fast after that, I didn't want her to do anything anymore. But when I talked to my mom about my brother, amazing that she never mentioned him, cool the whole time, she never say that; son of gun, why did he do that to me, no not

a word, instead she felt very, very sorry. When I got mad I brought up the subject, I say; you know I have no husband, at least my brother could have a little bit of compassion to me that I work so hard, he could help to take care of you after all you were his mother. She told me she would say; honey please don't get mad with him, I say; why, she say that; you know your brother is very confused, I hope someday God gonna lead him to know how to think right, and don't get mad with him, so that is all the answer I would get. Usually, at night my mom she, sometime I pretend that I am sleeping and I am not, she can't sleep, she is very worried, very depressed but she never expressed that she was worried or upset, the more she worried the more she kept quiet. At night, I fall to sleep usually she would come to feel my feet, my skin, and she would say; usually your skin never feel tough like this, but now it dies, she would just talk by herself, she didn't know that I was awake. Then she have malaria second time, and during that time, they have a big meeting and they would say that; well, do you want to go to *Battambang*, if you want to go raise your hand and I thought, well if I go to *Battambang* I would be close to my hometown, maybe I have a chance to sneak out of the country. I decided to put my name on it, during that time, we planted a lot of potatoes in front of our house, and the communist told us that; we don't know what day you gonna have to leave, but they gonna tell us ahead, and we kind of have an idea that they not gonna give us time so far. So I was trying to dig the potato even though some was still very small and some was big enough and when the communist passed by and they saw it, they say that; you know you folks shouldn't worry about that, we will let you know, you will have plenty of time to dig these potatoes, don't do that. But we didn't listen and we keep digging and put it in the bag, but my mom couldn't do anything and my sister was 8 months pregnant, so it was kind of difficult during that time. We didn't even feel that is was difficult, we feel that our obligation, we have to do that, we didn't even feel our mind was so numb. We have a few chickens, so my nephew and I try to cut the chicken and hang them, but they told us we have to move right away. This time, I think we have to take this big boat, I think it was 2 days trip, we have to sit near the river overnight and I would get up so early, I was worried because my mom, she had malaria because she would just get better and they know that if she didn't have enough food she would be sick again, and I couldn't sleep the whole night, I would talk with the other people. Near the morning, all the rice was cooked, I have some pickle fish on top of the rice and the dry fish and my mom was very surprised and at the same time she say that; she feels very hungry and she didn't know that I cooked all ready, so she was very happy, she ate it. And after that we get in the boat and traveled past *Phnom Penh*, it was amazing I couldn't recognize it, see I stayed in Phnom Penh so many years, I know the place but everything had changed.

Q. Did your brother go with you, so everyone went to *Battambang*?

A. Yes, everyone went to *Battambang*.

Q. When we last stopped, you were telling us what the communist had done, your family and you where going on the boat to *Battambang*.

A. Yes. We took the boat almost half day, and the boat stopped because we have to take a bus to continue to *Battambang*. So we have to spend night in one place where I can't remember right now, that place seemed like a building that they broke down, you could see all the bricks break piece to piece. In the morning we get on a bus or like a truck, it was hard a truck, my sister she was 8 months old she could not climb up, my mom she is very thin she just woke up from malaria. My nephew and I we pull her up and then we pull my sister up and put her into the truck. It was a long ride and all the time that my sister need to go to the bathroom and the woman pointed to were the bathroom was, so that was difficult to pick her up and pull her back and thins like that. And finally, at night, late evening we arrive in *Maung*, not in *Pursat* near *Maung*, so I was very disappointed, they say this is the place, I thought I was to go to *Battambang* and they took us there and we brought all of our belongings and they asked us to sit in one place and we could see the people who have been here before us. Those people came to meet us and they told us if you have any chicken or anything like that eat it now. Tomorrow, *Angkar* is going to collect it and give it to *Angkar*. We still not believe it. My nephew, he start to kill 2 chickens and we have 2 left and I told him keep one for me, I won't care, I would give to the *Angkar*. And at night I try to kill the chicken I couldn't, I just couldn't do it, it was the second time in my life that I tried to kill a chicken, I tried to be a big sport, but I can't do it. I cannot move my hand to hold a knife to kill the bird, I just couldn't do it, and finally I gave it to my nephew and let him do it. We stayed there until very late at night and they asked us to continue on for maybe 2 hours but luckily that night the moon gave us a lot of light so we walk a little bit easy. We go to the place that have not wall, so we have to put the blanket to keep leafs to make the roof, my mother would watch the baby, I had to go to the group they have a lot of activity. My nephew, my brother family they stay at the other house and all his 2 children they were around 12 and 15, they go to the group for the people who work hard and have TV and moving vehicles. During that time, I think they would send me very far from home, which was the first time I was ever separated from my mom. They sent me two weeks, something like that, I was all worried, I didn't know who was going to take care of my sister, but my family stayed with the old people who live there all the time, since the communist. Those people are from the time, since the communists. Those people are from *Takeo*, see the people from *Takeo* because the land is very dry, they cannot produce rice or something, they came to *Battambang* and *Pursat* they would pick some land would stay there because the land in *Battambang*, you know you plant everything very easy. And those people are very nice people, old couple and they loved my family very much and the old man he was very attached to me. When I went out to the field for 2 weeks, when I come home, everybody was so happy, especially the old man, he would sit in the morning waiting to see me. During the day that I came, my sister started to have pain, and my mom would say I think that the baby is waiting for you.

My sister get all worried because usually when she have baby I always change with her husband to take care of her, and also she never have, a Cambodian midwife. She always go to the hospital and be well taking care, so she get very nervous. And right away she have pain, and I asked two people in the neighborhood to please boil water and I go to get the midwife and the midwife was very nice too. I pull her hand and I say please come right away, she didn't even finish eating yet and she would come with me. And the old woman in that house, she came to help too, both friends delivered my sister's baby. It was a girl. I talked with my sister, she would say, she thought it would be difficult, she would get scared because in the hospital they have a lot of equipment if you have any problems, they get ready and save your live. But amazing though, she says she didn't have pain a much as if she went to the hospital, a lot of people give her a lot of attention, and help her by doing a massage or something, and help to push the baby. If you go to the hospital they not going to help you until the last minute. After that I was sent to work planting eggplant, cucumber, something like that. I would carry even though I was very thin, I carried 80 times a day, the water from the river to the plants. You do it from 6am to 5pm o'clock and you cannot stop. I always help the people and they always help me too, like the people go out to the town, they go to cash some fish, but they have no vegetables so when I water the plant, I pick eggplant or squash, cucumber and put it into the bucket, and when I go to the river I drop it in some bushes, and then the people pass by me, I say take that, and sometime they drop fish for me. Also, in that place, there was a shaman, he would get very impatient with me and asked me to marry him. My mother would just go crazy, she was afraid that somehow I would say yes. All jewelry that I have she doesn't want me the exchange at all, she say that your husband give as a present, you should keep it. But I do anyway without her knowing, for surviving. He follow me all the time, all the time that we ate, he always make sure that my people have enough food, he keep bringing more and more, like at night he will bring the rice to my mom. And I was getting very scared, in that village, we had one fortune teller, he was very old and he called me like a daughter, and I told him, would you do some magic, so that meant when he look at me he hate me or he doesn't want any part of me anymore. The old man he was a shaman too, he asked me; are you really honest to your husband? I say that yes I am. He says would you agree to shave your hair, I say no problem. A he asked me the shove my hair and then hide my hair on the ground so nobody would find it, and they would pray and make things for me to wear. The prayers are like so when that man would see me, he would not get attached to me, he won't want to marry me. Of course in that condition, who wants to wear jewelry. Cambodians believe that if you wear diamonds you can't be affected by magic. I shaved my hair and I wear a pair of diamond earrings, some people think, she knows he was in love. I wore the earrings to protect myself. I shave my head and covered it with the cloth, and I think when he saw me, he was very disappointed, he had all questions, he just don't know why. Did you tell him you were married? I told him I was married, and he had a younger who was a group leader, come to talk to me. They say that the man want to marry me. Luckily, that woman she has a problem too, she doesn't want to

marry someone, that is the story that she told me before, she knows that man who is in love with me. She says that; she got very sick, because she doesn't want to marry the man who her parents' want her to marry. So I have an idea, when she comes to talk with me, so I say that; I didn't mean that I didn't like him, he is a very good man, but I just heard, see this is what I had made up. I just heard from the people, they told me that they saw my husband, he was alive, but if he died I would marry with him. Again, the next few days, 3-4 communist leaders, they asked me to have a meeting, so my mom was very scared, during the meeting they have only 4 or 5 communist leaders and myself. And they was asking me questions, about we want you to get married soon, we want you to tell us the truth, do you want to get married or not. I say that: I like him very much, he is a very nice man, I just keep saying the same, but I heard my husband was alive, so I cannot do that. But if my husband is dead, I will marry him, and I said that I was afraid. That man still have a lot of revenge with me, he cannot let it go. He keeps saying that the first trip, the people from the truck, he saw me I caught his eyes. And later they came, the group leader, not the young woman anymore this is the older woman, she is in her late 50s, I think she is kind of like me too. She always told me; at night don't say anything from now on, he is going to try to pick your fork. I was very scared at that time. At night I go to carry the water for my family, he would hold the bucket, he would say; I want you to answer to me yes or no. If the other people would see me, we would get killed, they thought we were in love. So he really gives me a hard time during that period. Who would kill you?

- A. The communist, he was a communist, but he not a leader.
- Q. The five communist men, they said it was all right for you not to marry?
- A. Yes, because, I told them, somebody saw my husband, he is alive.
- Q. But why would they care?
- A. That's why for somehow, I went through all this lying, and creative thinking, I would not be alive. But I think, when your not meant to die, somehow you always manage through. This is what I recall before the country fall, I would dream, I had a very strange dream. I was alone in the whole world, this was before the fall of the country, I saw people walk and the whole world, it was all water and boulders, you have to walk over that, I was so scared, I don't know what to do, I heard a voice say that; if you pray to your parents, you will go through that. This was in my dream, and I would pray that; please save my life, I cannot go over this, I gonna die. And after I pray, it's like magic, I could walk through to the world, it's not problem. So I never think the dream would effect, until during the communist when I passed through all this dangerous period. And I was just thinking; maybe that dream just tells me that I would get through this dangerous period. During the period that I was working the plantation, see those group, they have more food than my mom and my sister. They would cook and pick the vegetable and cook and I always met the

people who were helping one another, usually in my life. While working there, we was planting the vegetable and one woman, she was staying in the communist the whole time too, so she was kind of leading the whole time. She was very, very nice, and she sat next to me, she says: where do you come from and I told her. She is very brave; she had a good heart to all the people, that woman. She says do you smoke cigarettes, I say oh yes, I do not smoke, but the cigarette is very good, you could trade with fish or food. And she asked her daughter, she is very small, around six years old, say why don't you go home and bring some tobacco for your friend. And I put it in my pocket, the relationship between her and I became stronger and stronger because she is very intelligent, they came from a very good family and they don't lie and they hated the communist system, too. During that time, I had my watch; it was Seiko, my husband brought from Thailand, the first time since the Seiko watch started to be sold. I was the third woman that would wear that. She just liked my watch very much, I say that: do you want to trade this with the rice, I would be happy to. Finally, I would trade the watch for the rice, for 15 cans of rice. But it is very difficult, if you have rice at home, because you could get killed, because if the communist found out, they would say that you stole from someplace. My sister put it in her pillow at night, she sleep over it. I think we have only 2 cans of rice left and that time I was working still and I slept over there, I came to visit my mom, quite often, because it is not too far, like one mile. But most of the time I would save my food very single day, two or three spoons for my mom. She is sitting, waiting for me all the time, when I came, she know I have food for her. Also, the woman who work with me saw me pick a few spoons of food, she says for who; I say: it is for my mom, and she gave me a few more spoonful from her own. One time there was people in the kitchen, I don't know who stole the rice, they were looking for the rice, they don't know who stole it. They checked every house, finally, they found that rice, and there was only one can leave. They thought that my family stole the rice. My sisters say it was from me, what can she says. But I don't know, I am not too smart, but god gave me a lot of ways to deal with this, I can't do anymore. She says that my sister brought it. But before that, my mom had a dream, she says you know I dreamed that part of our house had burned down, but I poured the water one, and it was OK. She told me that, we may have some problem, but I think you will be OK, that is before things happen. At night during that time, we eat a lot of potato, and I would ask my group leader, he was the big group leader, I asked him if I could have a few pieces, they say fine. It's not only that, I steal some for dinner and bring to my family. It was dark, I put a fire on and cooked potato, and somebody knocked n the door and say that: does this place have the woman, *Theanvy*, they would say that I steal some rice again, I say: I cooked potatoes, they say: were do you get that from, I say: well today we picked potatoes and I asked my leader if I can have a few pieces and they say OK, and they give it to me, and that's why I cook. They say I want to talk to you a little bit, he asked me to go out, and 4 soldiers with a gun, it was around 9 or 10 o'clock. My mom, she was very shaky, they take me maybe a mile from my house, so they say that: where do you get the rice? See the communist want the gold so much, it you have gold they

ask you right away. They say: the rice that somebody trade with me for the gold, they say that. Will you tell me who, I'm going to get the gold back to you, that was there trick you know. I say: no I can't even tell you because no, I think they die. They say that you have gotten to tell me the truth, if not, you cannot live with your mom anymore. I say that's all I can tell you, something click on my mind, one woman just crossed tree house, she die 3 months ago, and she leave 2 children, she know me a long time during the communist, not before. And I say: I will tell you the truth, the woman who trade the rice with me she died, months ago. And he says that, who, and I pointed, they have two children left, and they say that maybe the children know where they put the gold. And then I walked with the soldier and go to that house and I make up some question to the kid and I say that: where did your mom hide the gold, and the kid just look at me and say: I don't know. And the communist says: the soldier says: where, how many bags, and they kick through every single bag, was nothing in it. After that they just let me go home and they say that: you have gotten to tell me the truth. In the morning I go to work, the woman who I traded the watch with her and I told her about this, and she told me, she says: *Theanvy*, you know do not tell all, just like half. If they dig the hole, they won't find out anymore. You know she was very smart, that's why I like her. Her ideas are very good. She said remember that if you want the watch back from me, I will give it to you, but I think, you just cannot take back what you say. They will question me for a month, even though the other group leader he keeps questioning me too. He says that: tell me the truth, you did this, and I say that. Please, if you want, I talk very strong, if you want me to lie, I would, but if you want the truth, that is the answer. Then a few days after, the leader, when I am working, I get a message from the leader. He wants to see me, I can tell you, my soul almost left my body. I know that I was not going to be alive. After I got through from work, I go to see me and he was not there, nobody know that he wanted to see me, know nothing, and then that was it. I think the problem was over during that time, nobody follow me anymore. I think that man, he now forget, I was coming or will I be killed. Amazing that I was a dream during that time, see my grandmother, my great grandmother, when I was 4. I only saw her picture, I never saw or know her, and I dream about her, I saw a picture, and the picture was shaking, and the picture started to talk to me. She told me: don't do anything bad, keep praying and you will be all right. Then after that, they send me to the rice fields. It was very far from home. I could not come back and forth. Again, I had malaria, I was very, very sick, my bone almost break, and I was very could, and after the morning, I was shaking, and I had a very high fever and my head almost break to a million pieces. I wanted to come home so bad, because I now my mom would at least boil the water for, and I will feel better, and I miss my family a lot. Also, I am very, very depressed during that time. I started to miss my home a lot, before the fall. When I was sick, I still try to feel the wall, and I close my eyes thinking that this is my bedroom, this is my bed, I think just to ease my pain a little bit. I go to ask the group leader if they would let me go home. During that time, as a matter of fact, they wouldn't let me come home, I said that: I want to go home and go the hospital. And they say not you can't go,

and I say; can I go to stay with my mom until I feel better and they say no. Your mom cannot cure you. So there was absolutely no way that I could go home. And I still get up in the morning to go to work, by 8 or 9 o'clock. You have to stay in work, like this. By 9 or 10 o'clock, my sickness came back again, I start shaking, I ask them to come back to the place, and I would have a fever, can't eat. And then I think, they changed the idea. They let everybody go back and meet the family, because it was a new year. So I got a chance to go back to see my family, I grabbed all the rice, put it in my bag and come home. And I didn't even know that was my mom and family was not even home. They were sent to dig the canal; I didn't even know about this. I came home, but the house was empty. The old man who live with me, stand up in front of the house and wait for me. He says: your family should be back anytime soon. They sent them to dig the canal. Half an hour later, I stand up to watch the people moving and all my family come back, and I start to have malaria again. But it was better during that time, because my mom, she would make massage on my head, she would warm the water for me, and would sit with me the whole time I was sick. And again, during that day, they have a meeting that they are going to send people to the canal again. So I don't want to split with my family, so I told them that I go with her. Two days later we all go back to the place that my family dig the canal, a lot of people, 100 people. I still had malaria, because I had no medicine at all. I walk 2 or 3 miles and when the fever starts. I would just lay down under a tree. Even though I was sick, they wouldn't let me stay home, I have to go to work, even though I just go a couple of hours and I have malaria and they me home again. But my mom will stay home, watch the baby, I think my sister worked too. When I come home the food, you know I could not taste the food, they cooked banana tree. They used tamarinds and they put that in the rice. I was a hopeless hen, I would just cry and cry, you know, how could I eat this thing. My mom was good. She would calm me down a lot. She would cut the green mango. Sometime you didn't even know your mind whether it was conscious or unconscious. You just do it.

- Q. When you tell the stories about the communist soldiers and how they behaved, it's almost as if there is no law to the universe, it sounds like anything could happen.
- A. Yes. They create themselves as the law. There is no register their law. This story is very powerful, I think when you work with the Cambodians, they thought sit was too painful, if I get them to talk, I tell my own story. It is very helpful to talk, because people hide their story, they very ashamed, to get the people to talk, you have to begin yourself. By begin yourself, thank god I have been through the communist and I feel like, even though I didn't live every part of Cambodia during the communists, but I have a sense of every person who lived through the communist, and did not have an easy life. I get very emotional, when I work with the family, when they talk about my story, I just try to remain myself, I am a therapist, I can't help them if I lose my emotions, so I have to be strong. Going back to when I had malaria, I was just like a baby, I cry all the time, I thought it was so

difficult that I ever hurt in my life. But amazing, she never say that; oh it is too difficult, she is just quiet and do it. My mother never complained. My sister and I, my mom we have gold and we trade, and take a routine.

Q. Where were your brother and nephew?

A. He is in another village. He can fish and do something like that, so they need the people like that. He went to study in Phnom Penh. I don't know how many times I have seen him. He was sent to study in Phnom Penh.

Q. You were saying earlier that your brother never shared food with your mother?

A. No. But he is better. I forgot to mention to you that we stole the rice. My nephew was very helpful, he steal the rice all the time. If somebody saw him, they would kill him, right away, right in front of the rice stores. He stole the rice, and we cook it and give it to my mom and myself and everybody in my family. Amazing that my mother, she never eat the whole thing, she always split in half. And then we eat, and if we left some in the pot, she says: can I take that to your brother? And you know, I have no word to say, right away she would walk with happiness to go to my brother, give it to him. I think that the way she put her philosophy, my mom know every heart of her children. She knew that my brother has never been close to her, but it is because of the war. She doesn't want to loose her position as a mother. She always gave it the last minute if she could. Well she was a little bit discouraged of his wife, she think that his wife if she does not lead him the wrong way, he would be better. My sister-in-law family, some of them, they did not get along with one another ether. Then after that, my job, I was sent to work in the plantation again. During that time, my brother, he would come to my house, if we have rice left, we would give it to him to eat and he would talk so loud, I think his manner would change completely. I was scared, why don't he just eat quiet, nobody know about it. We have ducks, which are raised by the communist, 6 or 7 ducks, and they run around the house all the time, and my sister she says: gee I wish God, we could have one duck, and eat the whole thing. a few days later, the duck just fell down and dropped dead, we don't know why. My nephew, he would crawl under the house, put the duck in his suitcase, and at night he would cook, it was very delicious during that time. I would go to work in the plantation and my brother get very sick, all his body was swollen, and he don't want to take anything. I think my mom go to visit quite often, I knew it, my sister knew it, and then one day, I think he knew he was going to die, he wants to see my mom, my sister and me, my whole family. I was not there, I was sent away to work, so only my sister and my mom went to visit him, and he was apologizing to my mom and my sister, he says: everything I did was wrong, he wanted my mom to forgive all the things he did to my mom. My sister told me, I was not there during the time, he told my sister. He says that: if you want to survive, you have to work very close with the communist and do what they tell you to do. He keeps saying that he was a very bad son to my mom, but my mother never lost control, her mind is never changed, she always know what her position is.

She says that: son, you 're always been good to me and you always my good son, but I don't want you to get upset or angry because you were young and you have to go so soon, you don't have ask me to forgive you, I forgive you all the rest of your life. I think he hold my mom hand, my mom she kept her mouth close to his ear and says: if you are going to go, you were a very good son to me, and he was gone. I think when I look now, my mother she gives back my brother to me completely. After that, even though we have a close relationship, his wife is a very strange woman as a matter of fact; she came from a very good family. Her father was a teacher of *Prince Sihanouk*. She came from the high class's family. Somehow a legacy, it's seem a jealousy going around, she talk very sweet, but that is from her mouth, but not from her heart. All my brother's children, we love them very much, and they love us very much. After that, I was still in the plantation and I asked the group leader if I could bring my whole family to stay there. The young woman who I trade my watch to her, she always cheating, if you have 10 people, she would put 11 plates and then she would go very fast to confuse people and know that the extra one for my mother. Sometime she put more meat on my mother's plate, and the other persons, when they saw that, they grab the plate from my mom and my mom was very upset. She says why do you do that to me. I think the sins of the human beings kind of lost from the people, the people became very animal because of the starvation. It was amazing, my sister, she goes to steal the rice, I don't know how she could do that, every night, she have 2 or 3 every night, I don't know what time she get out, and already cook, and then again, I think because she have the baby and the baby was breast feeding and her body needed more food, so she was hungry all the time. One night, she stole the rice. They caught her at midnight. I woke up very frightened. They say someone was caught and I look and it was my own sister. I didn't know what to say. So they split them with me again, they say my mom and sister go to another place. Before my sister stole the rice, my nephew was very sick. My nephew and my mother were just like a buddy. They loved one another very much. He had no strength. If he was hit with a piece of rock, he fell down completely. He was sick and he stayed with me for a week. I have to bring him rice during that time. People stole food from one another, he look at the plate and say: how can they steal my life. Then he could not stay that long, because it is not the place where he belongs. So he was forced out. He told me please use all my clothes don't keep it. Then he says goodbye and he was gone. During that time my body was failing, and my mom too. Every morning, he drove the car and pass by the road that I go to work. The last time before he left, I saw him only one time. He just wave to me and since then I did not see him again. Then I saw the cop car that he drove somebody else drove it, and I thought he was sick. I have no idea, but I keep complaining, I don't see him drive by, and my mom keeps questioning by saying do you know where he is? I don't know. I think a week later the woman who she know my family, told me my nephew died because he had diarrhea. I still don't believe it. They say you have to hold back on his clothes, but I never told my mom. I was afraid it would be shocked for her, so we just misinformed the whole thing. Back to my sister who stole the rice, they split her from me and I was very

sick. I cannot even sit, that how much swollen I was. They have a few minute breaks. I can't sit. I have to stand up the whole time. One time, I have to go visit my mom, maybe a mile from my place, because I was so heavy and swollen, I can't even cross, there was a little bit of water in front of me, I can't even cross, I have to crawl pass and then get up and walk in, to go to see my mother. I went to see her and she was very pleased. Second time she was very sick, when I went to see her the last time, my sister wasn't there. She goes to work and I saw my mom, I think she was dying. She had an infection like my hand. The whole hand was pussy. She was laid out on the floor, and I saw my son who my sister gave to me stayed there and the baby was in her arms. Right away, I came to see my mother that time, I trade the razor, the old fashion razor that my mom bought, for the fish. I cook for my niece, and my son. I talk to my mom and she says: your sister I don't know where she goes. This is the first time that I heard her complain. She says: I was so thirsty and don't know where she is, matter of fact she goes to boil the water. I told her that I am going to go around half more mile to the place that they store the rice. They might give me some rice so I can come back and cook and eat it together. When I was there, they gave me. Before they give it to me I was mad, the communist leader, they would drive the cop car and I stopped them, and I say: I am very hungry, would you please do me a favor, they say what? I say: would mind give me the permission so those people who give me a can of rice. They say just tell them that I told them to give it to you. I say: they won't believe me. You have gotten to make a note. They did, they wrote a note, a letter for me. But when I came back my mom was gone. She was not really gone. She still has pulse, but she was not herself anymore. According to the Cambodian belief, I thought she is waiting for me to come back. That is what I believe, that's what a lot of people say. I just kneel down in front of her, and say you are going to go, please go, don't worry about me, as long as I am alive I will take care of my sister.

- Q. Before your mother died, did she share any thing with you like she shared with your brother, in her final moments?
- A. She never gave me words, but her behavior showed me. She showed me how she Love her children and how much she cared; if she were to do it by herself without letting me do it, she will do it. Like the food, it was a very difficult condition, and I give it to her, she told me she says that: you younger than me, you should eat more so you could survive, for me I am not going to stay too long, I don't have to eat. I thing the best gift was her children, even my father, she cared less after she had the children, she have no doubt, her children were the gift and the life for her.
- Q. During this time you didn't know what was going on back home?
- A. No, not at all, I didn't even know if they were alive. I don't know if I was crying or not, also I told her if I do anything wrong, I want you to forgive me, and after that she was just gone. But my sisters still come to take the food, and we eat all of her food, and I just fell sad, but it is still numb, don't know, I think it is because too

much to handle at one time, and because of the starvation and the situation was not easy. You feel better that she died, so you won't see her suffer.

Q. So you, your sister, the baby and your sister-in-law had to continue?

A. Yes, but my sister-in-law, she still separated, she's in the village, so she is not close to us, maybe one mile. I was very mad with her onetime, she was telling everybody about my husband, what he was doing, it was very dangerous for me, and I would talk with her and say that: you're not to do that to me anymore, I will do something to hurt you, so we both are going to get hurt. During the communist, the communist made you betray your friend and family, betray the father, and betray the mother, and betray the husband and wife. Because every night during the meeting, the communist would ask you to bring some idea, which would cause a lot of jealousy, they will say that before rich people always have his and that and now we all the same, so you have to criticize who is wrong and we will correct them, you get to confess the truth. And you get to know that during that time, the people have no loyalty of human's anymore. Their entire mind would say, food for myself, not for your father, not for your mother, not for your children, not for your husband, not for your wife. That is what occurred during that time! I think since my mother died, my sister and I were still separated and all the 2 kids still with her, and I don't know what's going on, I think she was still arrested, she have a lot of trouble, my sister, I think she was a little bit crazy. She didn't use her mind anymore; she just closed her eyes and did it. She stopped thinking. Usually, when I was in Phnom Penh, I don't act too much, usually I stay home, I am lazy as a matter of fact, she would go out and get some food and cook, even though she was pregnant, I just don't care you cook, I will eat it. She goes to jewelry place, I never go to jewelry place, if she gives it to me, I will wear it. I don't do things like that. She is the one who will run around, she's brighter than I am. I think that caused the people a lot of trouble too. They are people who were very smart, got into trouble.

Q. How did it cause the people a lot of trouble?

A. Because the people are very smart, the way they are thinking, they was thinking, it's more pain to them when they know they are smart, it caused them a lot of pain.

Q. Do you think your sister was very smart, she suffered so much, she had to stop her mind from thinking?

A. Yes, and also I think having a baby, which caused her a lot of pain too. A woman who feed the child, it would be double, they would drain you energy. I don't know what happened, I think I was working, oh no I was very small, and they send me to the hospital, and the hospital have no medicine, nothing, they say me at the hospital, they say that *Theanvy* you are going to die if you stay here, why don't you go back to your place and I would find some sugar palm, so you could eat it. If you go outside the sun different, you could see all the water. I never feel I was going to die,

but the people say that, no way I could be alive. Then I come to stay at that place, he give me some sugar palm and he give me a bag, and asked me put the fire underneath the bag, so I ate a lot of sugar, and my swelling was reduced from time to time, and I felt better. The starvation makes my entire body swollen. I didn't hear from my sister for almost a year, and my sister-in-law died. Oh I forget to tell you two son of my brother, one he was very weak. He fell down because he had no strength. He drown, he died. I think he loved his children, and the other one died, so he only had one left. I think she's around 6 or 7 years old. I think my sister-in-law, even though she was weird to my family and me sometimes, but I think before she died, she didn't even know who I am. She asked her daughter, she says that: when I die, you got to find your aunt and live with her and ask her to be your mother. I never see her since then, during that period I was in the hospital, when she saw me, she gave me a hug. She bring the bag that has two new sarongs to me, she says that's all I have left, you know before my mom die, she was so confused, and the communist came to my house and asked me where the gold, and I try to hide it from them and they say we will keep for you and when you grow up we will give back to you, so she took all the gold from her. See was the only one left. They kept her near the kitchen. For now when I study, when I work, I realize that the loyalty in the family is very strong, you can't break it, doesn't matter if you hate one another, its always invisible. She go to steal the fish for me, she says don't worry. I go get this for you. But I won't let her join me. I came to work the place that I almost got killed. Several moths later, I heard somebody was looking for me, I said, it must be my sister, second time she passed y I knew she is not going to live, because her eyes, she looked like she couldn't live anymore. When she came to see me, she wanted to stay with me, but the communist would not allow, they say no, she say no I'm not gonna go, I am gonna stay with my sister, please let me stay, she beg and she cry, but they would not allow her to stay. So they take her to the hospital and the hospital, amazing the people would eat with the plate, make stew with the plate, they cannot even go anywhere. My sister, she stay in the hospital, I went to visit her, every day, sometimes I skip one day, and I go because I am very tired, it kind of far. But when I go to see her the first time in the hospital, I took my son, the one she give to me, I took with me, because she had her daughter with her already. And I know if my son stay there, he gonna die, he couldn't survive. But my niece, I don't think she gonna live anyway, but I didn't even have energy to help her. My sister told me that, well up to you, I don't want you to think you have to take him, I think you have to take care of your life first. I told her; no way I have to take him, I take him with me, but the baby was looking to me, you can see in her eye, why nobody help me, expression in her eyes, but there was no way I could do it. The communist do not allow you to take someone's baby to take care of, that belongs to my sister. The communist are very cold. My son, if he was known to the communist, no way I could help him either, but he was a kid, told everybody he was my son. And then I take him with me, but some people still say that he is not my son, I adopt him or something like that, but there was no proof. I usually go there with my sister and wash all her clothes and then come back to work or I would

bring some food for her. Then she asked me about the food, what I have for her, and during that time, the man who was in love with me was working in the kitchen, believe it or not, but I think he had a lot of hate to me. I told my sister the man who was in love with me he works in the kitchen, and my sister told me please talk to him, if he can give me some food, but he did not want to look at my face anymore, no way I can do anything at that time. And next day, that night when I slept, I would wake up, I heard something fall from the tree, like a person who jumped from the tree, to the ground, I just woke up like that, I start to look it was nothing, and I fall to sleep again, but I thought something very strange. In the morning my son had a very high fever, he was shaking the whole time. I get an idea, my sister, maybe something happened to her, and then I talked to her, I say that sister if you die, please don't bother my son, he is mine now, and I will take care of him the rest of my life.

Q. You were talking to her spirit.

A. All of a sudden he felt better, two hours later, I look at him, he not sick anymore. My niece, she died 2 days before my sister.

Q. The baby died (niece) and then your sister died?

A. My sister before she died, she give me all the jewelry, because I never keep the jewelry, I always give it to her because, she always home, and I go to work in the field, and during that time she give me all the jewelry, she told me; I kept only one, who ever help me, I will give it to them. I think she had a sense that she not gonna live. Then the communist leader told me that I cannot take my son, he have to be in the children center. So I have no word to say, if I say no, I would interfere with the organization, they would take me, do whatever they want, so I have no choice, then I go with him to see my sister and to the children center and first the people who know me there tell me that; your sister died, they just took them out to bury, they buried maybe 20 or 10 at the same time. I go to look in her bed, she was gone, but my son, he cried and cried, I don't know if he knew his mother died, I have no idea, he just cried so hard. When we got out of he hospital, the old woman, she came to see me, and she hold his hand, he was scared. At the children center, they die, every day, because one die, they took the blanket from one, and use for the other one, the disease was contagious, it's very bad. During that time, the old woman she came to hold my son's hand, and she say that; honey come stay with me, I will give you nice clothes, good food, but no way, he would just keep his hand over my waist, and he would cry so hard, his body would shake, and he didn't even let her near him. They know, no way they could get him, and finally, they should take him, by using there power, even though my son cried, they just break there hand and take him, and finally, they say; I cannot do it, you have to take him with you. I would take him with me, he stay with me the whole time, and after that, I would come back to the same place, it's kind of back and forth, back and forth, I stay in the place that they kick my mom and my sister out, I like to stay in the same place. Now my niece, she

is with me too, she call me mom too, she is always taking care of me, try to find herb medicine, she say; my mom tell me this herb will cure this, she was only 6 or 7 years old but she knew a lot of things from her mother. At night, I go to work at night, if you go to work at night they give you extra food, at night I would go out so I could have extra food, she would stay home. She go to steal the cow skin believe it or not, I don't know how she did that, she stole the cow's skin and put it right near my pillow, and when I fall to sleep, I saw it, I was scared, because if somebody know about that, they would kill us too. And I take it and give it to the people in the kitchen, and I told her, I was kind of mad too, during that time, a lot of paranoia, you can hold so much for a human being, but a lot of time you can't take it, I was getting mad with her, I say you can't do that anymore, we all gonna get killed, and then they split (i.e. separate) her, they ask her to go to school, the children, they not allow her to stay with me anymore. I think she was very mad with me, she thought I was the one who split. For a year, I never heard from her. She said I didn't like her, she thought I loved my son more than her. The communist know she stole from the kitchen, so they split but somehow she thought I have a power, so she got mad with me, so she thought, but it had nothing to do with me.

Q. You didn't see her, for how many years?

A. Almost like a year, something like that.

Q. Is she still alive, where does she live?

A. Yes, she still in Cambodia. As a matter of fact she studied to become a teacher, she maybe 17 or 18.

Q. Up to this point now, the only two people left from this group is yourself and this little girl?

A. And my son.

Q. Everyone else has died. When your mother died, how did you feel at that moment, at that point, most of your family had starved to death?

A. My feelings were very numb, I just feel like relieved that she died, because I could not go to help her, I have difficulty to watch the way she suffered. But I'm very strong that time, able for thinking what I am supposed to do with her. By Cambodia way, I would sit, bow next to her, ask her to forgive me if I did anything wrong or I yell at her, something like that, and I told her that; please go and have peace, and I will be here to take care of my sister and the rest of the family. Amazing that a few minutes later, her eyes just closed and she passed away.

Q. So you made those promises to your mother while she was still alive?

A. I know she was gone, but she still have, she unconscious already. At night, my

sister came, and she didn't tell the communist leader that my mom die yet, so she brought the food, which is one part belong to my mom, so we all ate together. And then I spent the night with her, after that, in the morning I left her, from her place to my own place, which plantation is the same. But I never have feeling that I miss my mom, this and that, I was just completely numb that time, I just feel relieved. When I came to my place during that time, it was floating, they have a float, my sister came to visit me, she would walk through to the wall, it was quite deep, and she carry the little baby, around 5 years old, something like that. I kept my son, who was her own son with her, because I usually ask my mom to take care and she came and then after she ate, she come back home at night, I was have a lot of confusion, toward my sister, because she really suffered by caring and take responsible with two children. I feel that I have a better condition than her, she is very thin. After that I have to go to work, outside the plantation, around a mile from my place and my sister she have to come from her place, which was around 2 miles, farther than me, so she came to work together, I look at her she was very thin, and she carried the instrument that she has to dig the ground, something like that, but she never smiled anymore, when we finished work, she just go home, and I would go home. Then later on, I was very sick, because my body was swollen, and I couldn't walk, I couldn't work, when I am working, when they have a break for a few minutes, I just not able to sit, I just have to stand up the whole time, because I couldn't sit. I think my sickness became worse to worse and I asked him if I could go and stay in the hospital, because they don't want to keep you at home anyway, when you sick they want to send you to the hospital, you have no medicine. When I went there, I met one Cambodian family who when my mom was alive, she stayed in the same village and she was sick too, but she was lucky, her daughters worked in the kitchen, so she able to sneak in some rice or food for her mother. She was very kind, I think she is the wife of Commander or General as far as I know, right now she is in France. I usually exchange my jewelry with her in order to get food to eat. And then one time, my niece, she came and she crying and she bring a few clothes that were left after her mother died and she come to tell me that her mom died and when she died, she give her all the jewelry and she tried to hide it and the communist took it away from her. She say that her mom asked her to come and find me and ask me to be her mother. She always stole pickled fish for me, and all the time, and she say that for now on, I am not going to go anywhere far from you, I am going to stay with you. The communist leader who I worked with, the other one who my sister worked with, he had asked me to come home and stay at his place, he say that you not gonna get cured if you stay in the hospital, you gonna die. So he was very kind to take me to his place, and then he give me the traditional medicine, it was nothing, it was only plum sugar and juice, that I could drink everyday. And at night, he would make a fire under my bed, and I guess that cured me. After a few days, I was cured, but sometime a lot of people would die, because when you drink, your system is not used to a lot of sugar, and when you drink it, you get diarrhea and then you couldn't stop it and you die. I come to stay at his place, my sister was not there anymore, and I don't know the whole story, I don't know why, because nobody

tell me, and then a few months after, I heard someone told me, someone looking for me, but I didn't know who it was, I think it was my sister, and second time she came she not looking like a human being anymore, and I knew she was gonna die. And right away she saw me and gave me her baby daughter to me, and she was gonna get out from her cart cow, but the communist would not let allow her stay with me at all, they say that she have to stay in the hospital because she is very sick, she cannot work, and she kept crying, no I have to stay with my sister, but I just don't have no power to keep her. Finally, they just send her to the hospital, and every couple of days, after work, I would go to visit her. And basically, she couldn't eat, she have the diarrhea, so many times per day, and I have to go there to clean her clothes. First time, I didn't even ask her what kind of jewelry she have, this that, because all my jewelry, she the one who keep it, I never keep it. Second time that I went to see her, she just give me all the jewelry that she had and she say that; I'm gonna keep only one necklace, so if somebody saw me, we would give it to them. I guess she figured out, she not going to make it, and also she gave her necklace to the other woman, almost an ounce, and just for sugar. Can you imagine if she had diarrhea, and she ate something like a sour fruit or sugar, make her get worse all the time you know. Then she tell me, she say that; she very hungry about the fish, she want to eat the fish very much, and I say that; I don't know how to get it. When I come home, I saved some food that I had from my pot and I was gonna give it to her, before I went at night, my son, I took my son with me that time, and her daughter she gave it to the woman who she was a Captain or General's wife. After a few days the baby died, and she died a few days after the baby died. Her son was with me, but I have a tough time, because the communist would not allow me to keep him, they want to put him in the children center. It was unbelievable when you see the place that they kept all the children. They just put one, two, three, one after another, if somebody die, they took the blanket off and they give it to another one, can you imagine the disease, contagious to one another. And they tried to get my son so bad, but he would just hold me so tight, and he would scream and cry, so the woman who tried to get him, couldn't possibly get close to him. Finally, she left him to be with me. So I am gonna back up to where I bring the food to her. The morning at night, I didn't know that she died, it seemed something very amazing like somebody jumped from the top of a tree and I look, but it was nobody, it was the middle of the night, and in the morning my son was sick, he have a very high fever, and I just got an idea, I thought maybe my sister died already. So I prayed to her and then I give my son the medicine and go to work, carry the water, I carry 80 times, two things of water. And when I come home, two hours after I work, I come home to check him, he was fine, and in the evening I took him to the hospital and the woman I know her, she told me that; she died already. And she say you should go and check it, maybe I am wrong. And when I went there the bed was empty, but I still very numb, I haven't one thought that I wish she was alive, I never think about that, I am glad that she died, because she not suffering anymore. When my son come to stay with me, and then they send me to work in the rice field, which is far from the house, it is not easy like when you work in the plantation, the plantation

you have a place to stay, but in the rice field, you have to make your own place and a lot of times, when it rains it just go to the roof and it drop on your face. When I go to the rice field and I work around 3 months, and then I have one Cambodian, and I never knew her before, but when she saw me, she come from another group, which is around 5 miles from one another, but I met her because we went to the meeting together, we have a joint meeting. And she liked me very much, and she say that; she wanted to be my sister, and I say fine. Life is getting very difficult, even the frustration and she told me she say that; I should run to her place because she has very good connections with her group leader, he like her very much, so she kind of have a little power too. I don't know how to make it because the people I live with, they really give me a hard time, they wouldn't allow me to stay home if I was sick, during the day, I would have to go to work, do the rice, the water is so deep, sometime up to here, and I just feel very sick. And finally, I decide I have to run. Before I run at night, I have a dream that I had walked across the bridge and somebody gave me a cane sugar, it was very sweet, I was thinking, I thought it was a very good dream. I say if I run from this place, you know, I may get something else better, at least my life would be safe. That time, I didn't take my clothes at all, I just take very few clothes, and I told the group leader, I say that I will go to take a bath, I will wash my clothes, and then I even went to visit my old friend, and I exchanged the watch for rice with her in the past, she is very good, she liked me a lot, also, her mother had a lot of compassion toward me. When I went there, she told me that; if you gonna go, then go, but don't wait until late, during the day, you have to go right now. She cooked a whole pot of rice for me and she asked me to eat before you go on your trip, so I ate rice and after that I say goodbye to her, she wished me good luck. Unluckily, when I take off, it was my break time, and the communist leader wife, she saw me with my son, but I didn't bring a lot of clothes, it didn't look like I was going to escape. They were going to eat the food, because I think that time around 10 O'clock, and she saw me, she say; you were sick, where you going, you have something to eat, they not pay attention at all, they say can I check, you have something to eat, I say no I don't have anything to eat. My head bother me, I have dislocation and they told me the end of the village they have one person who is very good and make a massage and cure and come back to work. I just lied to them, and she said OK. When are you coming back. I say I come back today. And I then walked through there, and while I was walking I saw a *Khmer Rouge*. She's the one who loved my adopted sister, who I went to visit the last time she was in Lowell. When she saw me, she know me, she recognized me and she give an orange to my son and they we continued to walk again. When I was there, I saw the woman who she wanted to be my sister, and she was very happy and she introduced me to her group leader. But again I had malaria during that time, like in the morning I would go to work couple hours after the sun hit hot. My sickness start, I couldn't go to work, I have to lay down under the tree, and the communist leader, the young kid, they would bring the medicine, that was made from herb, a lot of medicine they give to me that I just cannot swallow, but the sister, my adopted sister, she told me, don't worry too much, if you work hard you will get away from

the trouble. But I was very nervous because I escaped so if people over there they found out about me, I don't know what they gonna do next. Month later they found out I escaped.

Q. When you say escaped, you just went from one war camp to another, but they would consider that an escape?

A. Yes.

Q. So you didn't escape into the jungle, you had just gone to another communist camp?

A. Yes. To be with my friend. Because over there they can like they go to cut the rice, they can sneak some and they can make extra so you have more food. And then a month later they found out that I escaped to the other place. So the communist leader in my group, they came to talk, my new group leader say that; I was scared so they want me to go back. During that time, if they can take me back, they could kill me definitely. My friend, who she is in Lowell now, she was very scared, after everything was over, she told me, because she heard a rumor say that, they gonna take me back, they gonna kill me, they had plans already. But the communist leader saw me working there and they passed me and told me, dear friend, you know you do not belong here, you gonna have to pack your clothes, you gonna have to go back tonight with me, but luckily, right away when some of my friends saw her, saw my group leader, she told me I should get in contact with the group leader, and tell them I do not want to go back, I will work hard I promise, because I want to be here with my sister. So she wanted me to tell them like that. I have no betray, I never steal anything from the other place, and I am very good. Just a few minutes after that, that group leader goes to talk with the new group leader and they say no, anyplace she can work, she can stay, she don't have to go back.

Q. Did you ever speak to your new group leader?

A. Before I never spoke to them, but I saw the old group leader come gonna take me.

Q. So if you hadn't gone to speak to the new group leader they probably would have sent you back?

A. Yes. So those people they know what's in, what's up, so they kind of let me know.

Q. Why didn't the new communist leader send you back?

A. Because I claimed that my friend was my sister, I just found her. Because that woman, she is a very tough worker, she somehow is like a group leader, after the big one. So she kind of has some power. After that, back and forth, they have to send me with the group, so I have to come stay with another group leader that include my friend too. That group leader they have a plantation that is not in the rice field anymore, and he don't like the communist system at all. Because he just

like to fool around and have a good time too, but he just don't want to talk. So right away he found out I was educated, he loves to discuss some topic with me, and either he have any modern medicine, he would come to me and ask me what is it. But he told me, you don't have to say anything to anybody, keep a secret like that. And when we worked there, they send me out again for a couple of weeks to cut the leaves to make a roof for a house, so I have to sleep in the middle of a forest. I drove the cart cow myself, and the first time, I never drive at all. But if I refuse they gonna send me to the rice fields again, which if I didn't have my son OK, but I have my son, it is very difficult if I go to work and he stay home, it is just a mess and the other kid will hurt him, something like that. So I told him I would prefer to go to *Tonle*, so they say you are gonna have to drive the cart cow, and I say fine. And then they give me a cart cow, and luckily the other woman she's a communist leader, but she's an old woman, but very kind, and she say; well by the way, can I go with you, I say yes, please. When my leader, he keep talking with somebody else, I would talk to her because I know that she have a good heart too, the woman who wanted to go with me, I ask her, I say that; I have no idea how to drive the cart cow at all, I just very worried, I say that if maybe you go with me, maybe we won't get accident then, and she don't worry, get on and I will tell you what to do. So she get on she told me, she say that; you have to hold the rope tight, when you go down the hill, you get loose so it won't hurt you. I did pretty good, so I drove to the place that I supposed to stay and a week later, I start to have a fever, and my hand have a little bump, and I didn't know what it was, I kept using the stick, I thought maybe the pus inside so I just couldn't break it, and maybe it get better. But the more I tried to break the more it became swollen, and I have a very high fever and yet I have to come back and forth to bring the leaves and then take the food back. When I come home, my group leader, when he saw me, the good guy, he say that; you have something going on, so you have to come home and take care of yourself. He didn't tell me what kind of sickness, because this kind of sickness according to Cambodian, this sickness they say that; if you say it is getting worse, it is gonna get worse, if you say it is nothing, then it is nothing, it is what you say. The sickness could heal and go the way you say. I go back to take my son and the others 2 workers, one a young man, the other one a young girl come with me, I stay home and finally my half body was swollen, I went to a Cambodian, old man around 60, he make the traditional medicine, and I ask him to give me a medicine to cure my hand. But he was quite dirty, I almost passed out, he come to grab me and give me a kiss and I was so furious, I don't know, I would just almost panic and I start to hate him so bad, and I say how can he do that to me, while I'm dying. When I get up, I say that; I'm gonna go home I don't care if I am dying and I go home. And my son even though he is very little, he kind of understand he doesn't like that old man at all. He would pass by my house and he would ask how I am, and he would say some bad words to that man, he would say that he's old and cruel, something like that I don't know. And again, one man who I think he's around in his late thirties and the communist leader wanted to fix me with him and I don't feel like I should, before that man I have one woman who he was doctor before and he was a husband of my friends and when my friends die, he

would keep contact with me and finally he wanted to get married with me. He say that; because he came from the same town as me, he say that; the reason he wanted to get married with me, not because he wanted just pleasure, or the usual things men think about, he think that because we come from the same town, we would be just like a family. And then when we get together, we would find a way to escape. I don't know if I said yes or no at that time, it was very difficult to say yes or no because I haven't have planned like that. Also, during that time, you just have no feeling, you want to have a husband, or get married, that is not a issue that I was thinking of. And he was very kind, and he came from the *Tonle Sap*, he brought a lot of fish and he still have his daughter, she was around 5 years old, they bring the fish for me and cook for me. But my communist leader doesn't know that he wanted to let me marry with him or not. And during that time, not only because my decision, my decision does not mean anything, up to the communist leader, but the problem during that time, when I and him get married, they have some question that I have to move back to his place, so his place that he stay, the place that I escaped from. And my communist leader group he want him to be here, after he get married. And the people over there, they wanted to take me back, so I was still very scared and confused. Finally things break up.

Q. So you were actually considering getting married?

A. My mind doesn't know, if you want me to do, I just do, like a dream, I never a real decision that I say; yes I love him, I just want to get married.

Q. You might have ended up married?

A. Yes, by surviving.

Q. So what happened he went back to the rice fields, and you stayed in your camp?

A. Yes, but I never say yes to him. And after that he went to his place and he get married. Couple months later, he was killed. The whole family, they were murdered. Because he was a doctor. He was very sorry when he got married with the other woman, she's not mature, kind of a kid.

Q. So he was very disappointed that you didn't marry him?

A. Yes, he was very disappointed, he keep telling everybody.

Q. How did you know he was disappointed?

A. My good friend in Lowell, she was in the same camp with him, so when they work together, he would always tell her how sorry he was, that he didn't marry me.

Q. How do you feel about that now, do you think you should of married him, do you feel sad?

- A. No, I have no feeling. During the concentration camp, I think, one thing I focused on was surviving, was with myself and my son. If I do anything, just because my son and my niece, not because myself.
- Q. Was his new wife murdered too?
- A. Yes, the whole family.
- Q. If you would of married him, you would of been murdered too?
- A. Well they would say something you see. At night, I think the communist always try to sneak in your house, or in the corner to see to hear or to listen to what you say. I think his wife the one who say something, this is just from my friend. He said his wife say that; I hate the communist because before it was not like this, we had a good life. And then they took the whole family, and killed. So it was not his fault, it was her. And after that, I don't feel sorry for him at all. I feel sorry for his daughter, she was very young. Because when they want to kill you, they kill the whole family, not only you. I had a lot of compassion for his daughter, when she came and asked to sleep next to me. Her father told her a lot about me, she kept looking to me, I think she know, I think her father told her about me. She say; who are you, all the questions on her mind, you gonna love me like my mom, looking into her face, my heart was broken.
- Q. She was murdered then too?
- A. Yes. Then after that the man, he was a farmer before, and the communist leader tried to fix me with him, and he kept telling me that; he's a very good husband, his first wife, when she had a baby, that man would carry all the medicine, go through wash. I am not crazy about that stuff, I don't need to know, they thought I would like that idea. And I told them no, I say that; I am not going to get married with him, and he say oh yes, you can't refuse with *Angkar* and they put you to marry with somebody, you got to marry them. And then when he was quiet to me, I go the kitchen he always try to pour the rice for me, this and that, he had an idea that I didn't like him. When he give me a bowl of rice, he say that; inside my mind I would say a bad word to him, he know I didn't like him. But he was so in love with me, by asking everybody where I come from, what kind of family, he always interested about that. Anyhow I would talk to the other men, the young man who he worked with me and he come from, I think a high class family, and he was very lovable. I talk to him and I say that; I have a question that is on my mind, I need to talk to you, I have my son and it is not fair that I do anything wrong and the communist would kill him, that isn't fair, I would sell myself as long as he is alive. I promised my sister, I promised with my mom. And he told me he say; you shouldn't get married, if you don't like it, but this is a young man's idea, it is different, but it is the way I'm thinking. I say if I do not get married with this man, I think they gonna kill me. So finally, I told them I'm not gonna get married, and they

would start to recall about my background and would say the reason that I don't want to get married to that man, is because I come from a very high class, my husband have a very high position in the government, blah, blah, blah. Because if they say my husband picture, I have one in my wallet, and my driver's license. According to Cambodia, before the war, not many woman drive the car, so few woman drove the car, so those are really at least the husband have a good position, so they can drive the car. And during that time, if my communist leader he's not like me, opposite with the communist, I would be killed already. So after I refuse to marry him and after that the old woman, he/she lived next to me, he/she tell me that; you should not refuse them, I am just afraid, that you will get killed, and how about your son. I should marry him, to protect my life and my son, because during that time, it was crazy by murdering the people. And then, I changed my idea, I say; I will go back and tell them I would get married with him. And I say that; they asked me why you come here, I say; I feel bad when I say I am not gonna get married with him, I decided to get married with him and they say, it is over all ready, because they plan to marry him with the other woman already. So I just got scared that time, and a couple of months later, the people who my communist leader asked them to take care of the plantation, he was a taxi driver before, so he was very talkative, I think he doesn't like me, because he always think that I walk like I just get out from the car, I walk like I use very high heels. He has all the criticism to me, he doesn't like me, I think that is because of the communist leader, he is more considerate to me because he thinks I was an educated woman and has a lot of important things he want to talk to me, he give me attention. So the taxi driver he didn't like the idea, so he was jealous of me.

Q. Who is this, the new communist leader?

A. No, he was just another person in the camp, he organized the plantation after my group leader, he is just in charge of about 10 people work in the plantation. He doesn't like me, somehow he thought he thought I just come from a high class, rich family, he just thought I never work hard. And then when the other group need people to work, he point in my face, he said my name, he said I should go to help them because he just don't want me to be with them anymore, I guess. And during that time, my hand it is very difficult, like I still carry two things of water to the plantation, but this hand I couldn't hold, it is very difficult, so the other hand didn't work as well as the right hand. And at night, we all, carry are stuff, because we gonna have to move to stay with the other group, and the people who have to go, they was very scared, because usually, in the concentration camp, at night they send you somewhere without a hat, they gonna murder you. That is the way the system work, so those people are sure that they send me for some reason that they are gonna murder me. So during that time, we have around 10 people, so I carry all my belongings and my son, and we walk around 1 mile, and during that time, they have a meeting and my son was very sleepy and I put him to sleep in somebody's house next to me. I go to talk with my group leader, the real group leader and I say; I just

want to be here with you, because I feel more safe and I thought if you understand that, then why are you sending me to work in the other place. And he would just, he couldn't say a word, and the place that we are supposed to move to, that place you have to work very hard, and I am not fit for that, because my other hand does not work well. So he get an idea, and he told people you gonna take me out from the group and add somebody in. Right away he go to call the other young girl, I think she's more heavy, Chinese, she's alone too, to add in the group. You can see that time, everybody there face, most of them didn't look like a human being anymore, because they know they gonna get killed, that is what they think, the old people cannot even eat yet, because there heart beat so fast, and the communist start to talk about, how many nights do we need, how many axes do we need, something like that. So it was a very scary during that time. I back up a little bit, when we leave the village, everybody closed their door, they just, they afraid to say goodbye to us. And when they add that woman, and the communist leader told me I can go back to my own place, so I carry my son and those people keep telling me, you are going to survive, you are not gonna get murdered. I think that near the morning they send those people cross over the river, it is not deep the water, and the woman who she replaced me, she was crying so hard and she talked to the communist leader and she say why do you want to kill me, I didn't do anything wrong. But the whole idea was to just send these people to give to the other group so they could have more people to work, they are not planning to kill people at all. But the people think that they was gonna kill. And he told her he say; no we not gonna kill you, we send you to work, and she say no, you lie to me because I know when I cross to the other side, the other group gonna come with the knife and they gonna kill me, and he was laughing so hard. And in the morning, I think when we all come back and see one another again, some people just cry, some people laughing, because it was amazing that how people reacted last night. And then I think I worked there and take care of the plantation again, I grow the tobacco, so, very often I will collect the one that is not too good, and I kept it, so I can exchange the fish, some meat that the people need or medicine. Several months after, they have plan to escape to *Battambang* province. The man who I told you didn't like me, he didn't even mention one word to me and this is a thousand people know about it, they make plan to escape. Because during that time, the Vietnamese come in, but they not close to my village yet, but the communist leader, the higher one, during the day of the escape, we just sneak in the night, they afraid of the Vietnamese. So we could sneak it out, we all know the plan. That night we drive to carry some rice because we gonna make the trip and I didn't know at all he didn't tell me, but the other couple that they live there in the plantation too. They told me, they really like me, they say; prepare the clothes, we gonna escape tonight and then I talk to my communist leader he say that; nobody told you about that, I say no, just prepare everything, we gonna escape tonight. Around 1000 people escaped that night, we were so scared because if the communist ever caught us they would of killed, it would have been bloody all in the forest. And sometime at night, when we walk, we would hear something sound, it would make you scared, because you think that the communist would follow, you

have to hide yourself in the bushes. You didn't even afraid that maybe a snake there, because this is right inside the forest. Walk day and night, day and night and finally, we gonna go to monk near *Pursat* province and we saw that the Vietnamese release already, so we don't have to worry, we could stay there, the communist won't bother us anymore. Right when we go near *Moung*, you can hear the gunshot, so everybody was scared to death and we will pass that. In front of the, they put the young man who drove the horse in front of us, go far to see what is going on, so we could continue the trip. So the trip, it is not easy, very often lot of scaring, I saw the water it was a beautiful color sometimes, you walk almost a day and couldn't find water, and if you found the water the buffalo and the cow would jump in first and the water just like mud and smell like a buffalo, but you have to drink it anyway. And during that time, the old people have such a very difficult time because they cannot walk too far, and first they hold a can of, they call salve, and one squash and later the father, the mother they walk far, the water they couldn't carry anymore, they just throw away sometimes, somebody say; well the communist follow us, we have to run, they just couldn't do it. So for I think 10 days we walk through the forest, all the way down and finally the clothes that I carried got too heavy, I throw them in the forest, I didn't take it. Finally, we arrived in *Battambang*, we go to the *Battambang* border, and you can smell all the bodies. It was very, very strong. And during that time, the woman who she walk with me, she having a baby too, so we got to stop and she have a baby and I was helping her take the baby and clean the baby and give it back to her, so we stayed there for awhile. But it is very difficult for me because I have no man that would go out to get rice from the rice field, because it gets very difficult for the woman to go, sometimes you will see the *Khmer Rouge* and sometime they shoot you, it was a lot of dangers. I just could not of want to do it so I stay home, I would help the other people who brought the rice crop by cleaning the rice crop, something like that. Finally, I decide that I will take a walk to *Battambang* City, I don't know how many miles from where I was to *Battambang*, maybe 5 or 6 miles. So I walk from there I thought maybe I saw some of my family, I have no idea who alive who die, so when I came to *Battambang* City, I came and passed to see my cousin, now she in Baltimore, she has really a huge house. I was really sad because I lived in that house before, her husband made a big house, and different people live in there and I couldn't find her anymore. They have a concert who live in there now, that was April, they have a concert right in the shopping center, before that place was a shopping center, they have a concert and they dance Cambodian music. It was too painful for me, I start to cry, I feel like I just alone in the whole world, I just don't know anybody anymore. I just thought they was crazy, by dancing, put all this make-up and have a good time, I just very angry. And then I went back, and in *Battambang* City, I met one of the brother of one of main class they live in my hometown too. I still recognized him and I say that; my name is so and so and come from a family so and so, do you know that if any of my family is still alive. They didn't even recognize me, because I was so dark and so thin at that time, they say that oh yes they was in this part during the communist, now they go back to stay with the hometown. I say that will you please

send the message to him that I was alive and I want to go back to be with them very soon, and that man he send a message to my sister. And then I took my niece with me to *Battambang* which I met the woman who she used to drive my cousin's car, my cousin when she was in *Battambang* City she have a few cars like a Mercedes, something like that, she had a driver, give her a ride anywhere she want to go. And I met her and right away she recognized me and she say; well why don't you come to stay at my house overnight, because I was gonna make trip to my hometown, but see I forgot that my son was there, and I didn't even think what is gonna happen if the war is not gonna finish yet, I'm gonna separate with him for the rest of my life. And I come to stay with her overnight and she ask me where was my son, and I say; I kept him there and I'm thinking I will go back later, my idea was just so very dark, I couldn't think the right way and that woman told me she say; you can't keep him there, you have to go back to take him with you, because the war is not finished yet, otherwise you are gonna lose him.

Q. What happened to your niece, did you still have your niece?

A. Yes, I went back, I keep my niece with her I went back to get my son, he was so hurt, just 2 days I didn't spend with him, he would just get so hurt he would not talk to me. He go to hold the tree and stand and cry, I think he thought I betrayed him and then I go to pull his hand, and I say we have to go back to our hometown now. Take a few hours before he would come and sit next to me, so I took him with me. during that time, I had rice, I had around 20 cans of condensed milk can of rice and I keep a change, desert, food for him, all along. And when we came to *Battambang* City I say goodbye to that man and I told him I have to go to my mom hometown, so I took my son and my niece with me. It was quite far from *Battambang* to my hometown, around 40 miles. And I know that my son cannot walk that far, very often I have to carry him, once in awhile my niece would complain and right away I saw one man who had a ox cart and I asked him if I can let my son, just my son to sit in the ox cart so I could walk better because I couldn't carry him anymore and he had a lot of compassion to me. He let them in, and he asked me where I am from and this and that and then we had to spend the night half way from *Battambang* to my hometown, because it was quite far. And at night, it was amazing that man he have one son too, I think he had a teenage son, so I was sitting under the tree near the ox cart and at night he would take his blanket to cover me and my son and his son and then in the morning when he say goodbye to me, I found out in my rice bag, he put dry fish for me, I didn't even know that. In the morning I start to the trip again because he have to take off, he not able to give me a ride anymore, so I have to walk with my son and my niece to continue my trip to my hometown. And sometimes it is very scary because the road it is very quiet I kind of feel very afraid because alongside the road you could see a lot of people killed, some dry already, you didn't see Cambodian anymore, it was so strange, the Vietnamese they patrolled and they ask you a question and they let you know if you can go or not, things have changed a lot. I feel like I'm not in Cambodia, I feel like I am in a very strange

country. When I walk a little bit more, I saw one Chinese man, I try to talk with him, at least I could along with him, I won't be too afraid, I say; where do you come from and he told me that he come from my hometown, and I say; do you mind if I go along with you and he say fine. And I go along with him, and that man, I still have a pair of shoes, a communist pair of shoes, I don't know if you ever saw it the black one. I wear that and he ask me, he keep complaining my feet hurt, so I give him my shoe to borrow, and he would just keep reminding me how strong I am, he said you very strong woman, look at the way you take care of the children, it was amazing, blah, blah, blah. He just kept reminding me all the way down. And before I arrive in my hometown it was getting dark, so I could not go anymore, specially my son, so I have to stop and ask somebody there if I can have food because they have a Cambodian writing to say that, we will offer you food, please come to us, so I went in and I told them I say that; my name and I come from blah, blah and family name and I just want to ask you for some food, gradually run out of food, it was dark already, and right away I present who I am they know one of my family, they say oh they just left a couple of weeks ago, your nieces she have trouble walking and we make something from the wood, she can hold by herself and learn to walk. And I feel better at least I know the family is still alive. And they treat me very warm, as a matter of fact, they thought that the man who go with me was my husband. They give me food and I cook and I serve them and my son and at night they give us a big place to stay and they give us a candle that I can burn. And I think that because during that time, I go with the men like woman, I never afraid, I never feel like I have any feeling this and that, so it doesn't matter, I didn't even think he was a man, I shouldn't worry. So they have a plan, he sleep like that, after that, my niece, after that my son, and then me. And at night believe it or not he tried to reach his hand to my hand, I was so furious, I get up and I say that; if you gonna do that again, I will go to sleep outside, you will sleep here, I think that he feel very guilty. He say no, you go to sleep with your children, I will go to sleep outside, I say good because if you sleep her I will go to sleep outside, he go to sleep outside. I say I don't want you to treat me like that anymore, I was very mad with him, and in the morning, it was still dark, I was awake, all my children continued the trip again, I didn't even ask where he is. I was complained when I meet the people, I complained all the time, I was so furious, I say; why something always happen like this, the country war and the people suffer, why do people cannot act like more compassion and considerate to the other people they became, acted very crazy. I met a few old people they was gonna go to the pagoda, I keep complaining all to them, and they say oh too bad. So finally, I go to my hometown, around a mile from my house and I met my cousin, and he couldn't recognize me and I call him, and he say oh, and he ask me where I am before the communist. And then after that I say goodbye to them and I told my children, I say that; we gonna be with your aunt very soon, and I went to my place and all my niece and nephew grew up for four years, I didn't see them for four years. But I still recognized their voice, they didn't recognize me at all, as a matter of fact, they didn't recognize the two children either, because they did not have a chance to see one another, something like that. So I

was standing next to them 10 minutes, they didn't even ask me a word, and then I asked them, I say your mom, where is your mom, they say upstairs, I told her go to call her I am your aunt. And by then she recognized me, so they all go very excited to call my sister and I went in the house. We just couldn't talk, my sister thought I left the country before the war, she didn't expect me in the country, because my brother-in-law was a commander and pilot, so she thought we all left already. And just realized that I am still in Cambodia, I suffered a lot and everybody was just crying, my sister couldn't talk anymore, they cry in a corner, they all cry. And after that I think they go to call my dad, he keep busy, he have a lot of stress and depression, but he is a very good mechanic, he could do a lot of things, he is very clever, and he spoke so many languages. And he came and he saw me, he would just cry so hard, and he come to feel my feet and like he was a big shot, he wanted to kill the communist somehow. He asked me, he say that; what did they do to you, how do they use you, why your feet changed to be tough, not like you have before. I didn't cry that time, I feel like, I don't know, I was so numb that I didn't even cry. And he say I hate communist, they abuse you, but I feel like he talk about somebody else, he not talking about me, and then after that he couldn't sit and talk to me too long, I think he went back to work again, he had to keep work like that. And my sister tried to make some food for me, like the Cambodian hors d'oeuvre, she tried to exchange and serve me all this food, and my son, did not recognize my sister at all, he thought that somebody else was very kind. I didn't even forget about that, because he usually, during the communist, he always warning me or somebody else if they try to sneak, or steal something, he always watch out, even though they didn't ask him. So we all sit and eat and I didn't eat yet, because I say no I am talking and then most of them sit and eat, but my niece, she recognized all her aunt and then my son he afraid to eat, he don't want to eat to much. And then he came to talk to me very soft he say that; mom, I don't why my sister eat a lot you know, she not afraid of them, she keep eating and eating, and I realize that he not remember his aunt at all. I was crying during that time, and I told him this is your aunt, you can do anything you want, they won't harm you. And a couple of days after, my sister she kept some gold, to go to do shopping, something like that, my niece, she found it, because they always wrap it in very small paper, and put it everywhere. She pick it and she give it to me, she say she found it and why don't I keep it, I told her that is your aunt you cannot take from her, you have to go to give it back to her. So they give it back to her, and every morning my son, my sister she kept the gold, he always sit very quiet next to her, and she say that; can I have a little bit, he always beg for gold, because he know that gold could buy a lot of things. And my sister was teasing him, she would say that; go tell your mother that I am not going to give you anything, so he would come back to me. And the onetime he was very sick, he had a very high fever and he wouldn't want to let me go very far from him, and every night since he came to stay with me, they all get jealous both of them, my niece and my son, they both want to hold me the same time. My son before he fall to sleep, he has to touch me a little bit, otherwise he cannot fall to sleep. So when he was very sick we have a medicine that my uncle made it, he made it before

leaving. In my hometown, everybody knew about him, and we used that medicine and I asked him to take it and the medicine was too strong and the taste was awful, even though the old people, you have to close your eyes and stop breathing for one second in order to drink that. And I told him I say that; you have to drink this, as soon as you feel better, we gonna escape to Thailand, I gonna find a house for you and we not gonna be suffering, you have no idea how he tried to drink, he just closed his eyes and he just popped the medicine into his mouth. And after that I realized that I have to go to the border to exchange the food for my family, because I am the youngest and I used to travel a lot so I think I will be the better person who gonna go to the border. So finally, I decide to go with one of my friend, she was a teacher too, I didn't let my father know, because he doesn't want me to go to the border at all, and also my son, he never separate with me since during the communist, so he would cry so hard. And also he was such a joy in the family, because he remember all the communist songs, so in the evening his aunt would put him in her lap and ask him to sing, and he would sing all the communist song for us, he was such a joy. During that time, that he knew I was gonna leave, he was crying and crying and we make a cake for him, and he almost put it in his mind, right away he say I am gonna go to the border, he dropped the cake, he couldn't eat it, he started to cry, and finally I told him, I say that; I will return, I told him I would get candy, I would get a book for him, because he was in school already, finally he said it was OK. I am afraid to take him with me, because the road was very dangerous, and in the morning I didn't even say goodbye to my father, I left. (I forget his part). When I stay in that house in my hometown, I was looking very hard for my sister-in-law who the husband of my sister who have twins, and I make cake, I stay late until 2 or 3 o'clock sometime 1 o'clock, in the morning he get up around 5 o'clock, he drive bicycle, go to sell. And my father he just couldn't fall to sleep, he lay down in the hammock next to me and he would sing all the songs, and he always say that I never work hard like that, this song kind of comforted me and he just want me to know how much he love me, something like that. And now I am gonna return to when I leave home to the border. During that time, we asked one of the soldiers to go with me because he could carry a bag and a pot and rice, so both of us just walk free, especially the old man Terry, he know that no way that we could go and save. And he always tell us when you hear the gunshot, don't run, if you run you may step on a mine and your not gonna be alive. And sure enough before we go to the border, the gunshots start, the *Khmer Rouge* and the Vietnamese fighting. And I was scared to death and I would run so hard and that military told me don't run, just stay right next to me, don't run, but I didn't even listen because I was panic. So I run, finally we separate from him, we lost him, and I was just with my friend. And then before we hit the border, the guns, everything was quiet and I realized that all my leg, my feet, my toe, it was burning and bleeding, and I have no strength anymore. So I decided to sit down for awhile, I told my friend, please sit down for awhile, this is still in the forest yet. I have nothing to eat since the morning because the men who carry the rice, I lost them. So I have to cut the gold, and exchange it for Chinese cake and the condensed milk the sweet milk and I drink eat it and eat it and I get diarrhea at the

same time. And then I start to continue until close to the border, for three days I couldn't walk because my toenail was swollen and ten of them would fall off. My friend she come back to get her daughter, and I tried, I just afraid to return, afraid that I may get killed, so I decided to stay in the camp. And I did send sugar, something my father use to like before, and I send the young man and I told him I say that; you go to my dad and tell my sister that I asked you to bring my son with me and he say yes, but I forgot to put the address, I wrote all the letter, but no address. So that man come back from Cambodia, bring all the stuff and say I couldn't find it because no address. Then I have some jewelry that I need to sell, but I have one person who I trusted they say that they gonna sell and make the profit for me so I can. I still tried to go back to Cambodia, but I just want take time because I am scared if I return back too soon. The woman who took my jewelry, she never returned, and I keep asking where the money is, and they keep saying; next month, next week, I lost the whole thing. And during that time, I may just kill myself. They took all my jewelry from my sister (the women stole your Jewelry). They said they would sell it and when I asked for the money, they say next week, next week.

Q. Why did you go to the border in the first place, was it to get food for your family?

A. Yes, all the jewelry is not mine.

Q. So you are now in Thailand without money?

A. No, not in Thailand, I am in a border camp.

A. After I lost all the jewelry, I was very disappointed, I feel like I take everything from my family and then I destroy it, so I feel like I cannot go back to my hometown unless I have something to bring back to them, because they expect me to have something to bring back when I return. Unfortunately, I have met one of my relatives of my sister, my older sister, I had stay with her for a few days, she come to stay with me a few days, she come to stay in my house before she left, and I always at night stole the coffee from my father and give it to her at night, because I know she was very grateful. When we met in the camp, I told her that, I just have nothing left anymore, because somebody took all my jewelry, and they never give the money back to me. And then some of my friends, kind of turned me down, they not too crazy about me, they just want to be disconnected from me, that was very painful for me at that time, and then they have one military man; and he came and said I will lend you 5,000 dollars so you can do some business, I say fine, good forward it. I didn't even count the money, a week later he say he need the money back, I didn't even spend the money yet, and the money was short 200 bucks, so on top of that, I don't know how I have 200 bucks for them, luckily, the woman who stay in our place she came to do the fortune that I lost. I buy the gold and sell the gold across the border to the Thai and sell the gold something like that for living with the other woman who teach us. During that time, my nephew give me a few pieces of ruby, his father made and give it to him and I kept it, also I have around

2,000 *Riel* in my pocket, that include both of us, the teacher who stayed with me. At night, when I go to sleep, I put the money in my pants and I sleep in the hammock and cover with a blanket, and one of the military they came, I just don't know if they know that we get a little bit of money, they just want to steal it or I just have no idea. And when they came, and they asked me if I have 5 *Baht* for them to buy cigarettes, and sometime in the camp like that if you know the military and you feeling safe and something happen, you depend on them for the safety. And the same time that I pull the money from my pants, that I put in my suitcase, the same time the two man that live next to my house, those people are very poor, they really have nothing to do for living at all. They are one, they are group leader, so they can discipline you. They receive the rice or fish from the Red Cross. Neither me or the teacher, my friend who go to take the rice the other food that they always ask her daughter to go and pick it up and they kind of a little bit this good because they say that; these two women come from a very high class family and now they don't want to go to carry rice by themselves, all those things, jealousy is going on. At night, when I give the 5 *Baht* to the soldier, those two men come and the same time he would knock at the door and show up, I don't know, they were set-up, something like that or what, I don't know, maybe the soldier, that man they set-up together so they can have money, I have no idea. And he knocked at the door I opened the same time I give the money to the soldier. That night, I was sleeping so soundly and in the morning at 5 o'clock when I woke up I saw my suitcase near the door and all my clothes, and I knew something had happened. They took everything, they didn't even leave one cent for me. That time I was very depressed I started thinking that I was gonna kill myself.

Q. Who stole all your possessions?

A. I really don't know, but that is the people who lived next door that I suspect. And next day they would have a lot of food and buy new clothes, right away you could see the change, they was very happy to have something, they cook a lot of food, that they never had before.

Q. Well, I think after all you had survived before, what did you think of the fact that someone stole your stuff?

A. Well, I think after all, I think Cambodia, one for surviving, the other one for jealousy.

Q. What do you mean jealousy?

A. Jealousy that you able to do something to make a living, but they can't. Back to during the communist, that's why the poor people get mad, that where they train the poor people to get mad. We went to the rich people because they have no possibility to do anything but the rich people always do something, they always have an idea or money or find way to survive better than them. But I just feel very

difficult, because money really problem for me at that time. And when I met the relative of my sister, that's the in-law of my sister, and she gave me some cash, and then she say when you go to third country, you can pay back to me. And I have that money stashed since then. And then they left and during that time, my friend who was teacher, she was very sick she had malaria, and I would take care of her the whole time and then the Red Cross announced to the sick people, they say that they have to take them to *Khao-I-Dang*, the camp had just opened and they did not have any refugee stay there yet. And that time I had a chance to go with her, to *Khao-I-Dang* camp, and you see a lot of volunteer's from everywhere, in the world come to help the refugee at that time. And we got a house the first day, I think that was number 21 or something like that and we spend overnight just without a roof, next day we have a bamboo and then we have to have 12 people stay together and we never have a fight one time, we get along very well, and some go to work and I was working with the German hospital that time as a nurse, different places so we have food we bring home, and then cook and eat together. Well I work so hard, I am very happy in the camp. I can help people, even though I have more than Cambodia, Vietnamese, but I never have a doubt in my mind that I would treat them different than Cambodia. I have seen a lot of *Khmer Rouge* that came to stay in the hospital. When they would just see me, they just don't want to see my face, onetime I asked them I say; I kind of recall you somewhere during the communist of this part. They say oh no you confused, they were very scared. And in the morning a lot of people, at least 5 people come to sit and waiting for me to give them the medicine, because they not sick, but they need some kind of aspirin, antibiotics. I always sneak it out and put it on the truck or I steal the serum from the German and give it to them because they are very poor. Those things they can give to the patient not only the outside. I would take care, myself and the other nurse, he was a man, we took care of 32 patients, in the morning we give them an injection, and clean the wound, 12 o'clock in the evening midnight, we have the night duty all the time, we work so hard. It was very happy because all the patients were so grateful and the German hospital I will never forget how I was grateful to them for helping the refugee. They really work hard and they really helping the worker very good, like the wouldn't let the worker drink regular water, they would have bottle water pure and give it to the worker, something like that. That was a very good time even though it was kind of rough when you see a lot of people get hurt and injured, and come to the hospital a couple of hours and die, something like that you know. But at least you feel like you do the best, not like during the communist, you don't have nothing to cure and you watch them die. And I still remember that onetime, the family who have only husband and wife, he had convulsions and he die, and his wife was very young and she would cry a lot and I remember the German people told me to sit right next to her near the body, just comfort her until they took the body out. We took care of a lot of leprosy patients too. It was a lot of fun, but we worked hard. And then by July or June 1980, I usually translate Cambodian to French then English to Cambodia, a lot of stuff like that, and July 1980, I have to move because I have a call from the Embassy, that I have to move to a *Chonburi*

camp which I was very sad, because I kind of missed the German my old friend a lot, I still have my brother he was the German, right now he is in Germany, he's been through a lot to me. And we cried when we left and when we came to the *Chonburi* camp, It's still very often that they would come from *Khao-I-Dang* and sometime they would give us money sometime they would bring some food, towels something like that. And I forget to mention, during the time, I was in *Khao-I-Dang* my sister-in-law, when I was married I never saw her at all because of the country where she lived was cut by the communist. All of she recall of my is she knows that I was a nurse in the *Khao-I-Dang* camp, and I think she came to the border and she got shot, I think she was three months pregnant, while she got shot, she was still talking, she told the people, I have a sister-in-law, she's a nurse in the camp, I am very anxious to see her, I don't know what her face look like. And then after that they brought her to the hospital to have an operation, because they thought they may save her life. Unluckily, she died, they couldn't save her, and I couldn't see her until she died and was taken to see her, I saw her face, then I was organizing. During that time, *Kao-I-Dang* was no food no market at all, everything was closed, the Thai would not allow to open. And all the German friends of mine would carry stuff from *Aranhaprathet* like soda, meat, fruit and also they would drive to pick up the monk, to have a complete ceremony, and they didn't even let me pay for that either, they paid for the whole thing. Now I am back in *Chonburi*, when I was in *Chonburi*, during that time, the camp was open too, you could see a lot of women deliver the baby almost just no room at all, but I still not working yet until 2 months later. I had called to work at the maternity child clinic, I'm the one who do the health assessment for the children under five, if they are malnutrition, I refer them to the supplement feeding or if they are under weight, I would send to the doctor to check up something like that. Everyone have a two month or a three month exam, I would give the injection and medicine to the children under five at least 35 to 50 per day. I think 1980, I received a letter from Cambodia that my father was dying, I was so shocked at that time the American who I work under her, she is very good, she just let me stay all day and she would bring a lot of stuff like envelope and paper, she wanted me to be in the room, quiet nobody bother me, and she wanted me to write, and if I wanted her to doing anything she would. Also when I was in the camp the immigrant gave me a tough time, I had asked one time, I thought maybe I did not understand them too well, so I think maybe it a good idea I will have my American friend to go and explain the situation, maybe I can come to the third country faster. But I brought my friend to see him, the immigration were furious, he told me that; I was a liar, and that I could give them information and next time, if I ever bring the American to talk with them again, my file will be lost. And then I was very disappointed, I've been crying a whole lot during that time because it was too painful because when you think that when you talk to American people tell them the truth, you thought they would recognize you, and then beside that they turn you down, push you to talk what they want to hear, but you want to say the truth. I try sometime I bring the paper to talk to them and right away they would hold the paper like this, they pretend that they read the letter, and I would ask them I would say;

excuse me Mr. Ka can I talk to you and he say I'm busy reading the letter, that was very painful. And my file was lost for 6 months, and after that they redo it again and I have to go for an interview with immigration, and they would ask me a few questions and they paranoid and they reject it, and my file was lost again. And then later I decided that doesn't matter that I have a chance to come to the United States or not, any third country that would take me, I would go, after that I would get in touch Australian people because that country will take the widow very easily. When I decided I became very strong, and after six months they announced that I was to be interviewed again, and I go to be interviewed, they didn't ask me too many questions they just asked me couple of questions and I just passed. Living in the camp is very difficult because usually I went there because I am in charge that department after American people, I have all the keys and everything, and all the worker that I've been working on, they just like my brother, they would do home visit, sometime they lie to me if I put them to get more results. And at night if I stay home I would cook something and I would forget, bring a book across the street and give it to them. When I move from *Chonburi* camp to the holding center which just maybe a half a mile, and then the Thai would ask us to sit in line, and they would treat us like animals they would point there feet to you, or use a stick to point to the front of your head, they just treat us like slave. And finally, we have a chance to get in the bus and when the bus go to *Lumphini*, you have no idea the way, they so cruel they throw all our luggage, sometime into the pond next to that, they just been very cruel, I don't know why. The Thai people, the one who survive day by day, they very kind to the Cambodia people; they will bring vegetable and salad to the refugee and on top of that. If they saw somebody that was really poor they will give it to them without paying. When I was in *Lumphini*. *Lumphini* was a place it was so dirty and you have to sleep near dirty water, but I'm lucky I just spend the night and the mosquitoes are unbelievable but I spend there only one night and I have to continue to, I thought I came to the U.S. but it isn't. They put us in the ship from Thailand to Indonesia. It was very scary, it was such a big ship I don't know how many hundred people there and the first day the people all get sick they throw up, they bring the rice, they couldn't eat it; second day was kind of better, but a lot of scary because at night you couldn't see anything at all except the water. It was four to five nights and after that we arrived in Indonesia and you see another strange country, and those people kind of better than those in Thailand. They have a house already for us but the house have to be far from the ground because they protect they call it ground 2, because at night you have a wolf or a tiger to the town, so that is why they very protective. At 11 o'clock they all come to patrol to make sure that everybody close their door, and the distribute the food too. A month later I was working at the (ICM) International Committee, I don't know what the M stands for, but those people the one who give you the check-up and give vaccination to let the people get out from their country to the third country, and then I had a call from the immigration again they say that; I cannot go to the third country, they have to recheck me again. So I was very upset and I thought this time for sure I don't want to be alive anymore because it is too much trouble for me. I think I took medicine

chloroquine, I took 3 tablets but chloroquine is so strong just 3 tablets I couldn't get up, and all my husband's family they would come and sit and cry they don't know how to help me, they were very kind, they would make food for me they would just always make special food for me and the other try to make a bread that I could eat while still warm, they treat me very, very nicely. I never had a chance to cook myself, they always cook for me and later I think the immigration called me, they sent the social worker to talk with me, the social worker was relative too, but an in-law, and she was kind of a couple years younger than me, when she talked to me, she just didn't want me to get depressed, all these things. I told her, I say that; you know that when you carry the water you are the only one know that it is heavy, if you never carry the water you would never know, so I would suggest that you not try to tell me what I suppose to do. And she never talk to me, she would lay down and fall to sleep in my arms and didn't say a word. And again, the immigration called me and he was very nice the one in *Galang* camp, he wouldn't let any translator, he just wanted to talk with me directly, he say that he feel very sorry because they reflect me, he say that would you have any sponsor in your family in the U.S. that they could go and do a telex as soon as possible and I give them the name. But I don't know the people who sponsored me, those people I never knew them before, it was very strange, I got really worried, I thought maybe somehow I thought maybe they would take me here and they just want to do for business or, I don't know you just have a very scared feeling because some Cambodians were sponsored by the Vietnamese and then when they came here they don't want them to contact to anybody they don't want them to use the phone so they kind of kept them at home and they would kind of use them something like that. I hear all this story, but I don't know if it is the truth or not, finally I decide I am not going to worry, I will deal with it whatever comes, and I decided to come to the U.S.. I have to go by boat from Indonesia to Singapore, I stay there for a week, which I had a chance to go visit the town, Singapore city. Then we take the plane and come directly to San Francisco but before I come I have no feeling when I get on the plane, I'm not happy but I'm not sad but as soon as they announce that we will be in San Francisco shortly, be prepared to take off and I get very emotional, I feel like I am missing my family a lot and I was thinking I don't know when I can go back and see them anymore, it was kind of the end, like I am in another war. I feel like I want to go back, there was all emotion coming towards me, and I spent two nights in Hamilton, the camp in San Francisco I forget the name. And then after that I took TWA flew from San Francisco to Illinois and the people who sponsored me I never knew them and they never knew me, they just saw the case and they just feel very sorry and they want to sponsor me. I think back and I don't know who my sponsor and finally everybody their family took them home except me so those two young men, he was around early twenties he come to me and say are you so and so and I say yes and he say I am your sponsor and I come to pick you up, I still confused, I don't know who they are, because they such young men. And they would carry all my suitcase and put it in the car and when I arrived to their house I heard him call his wife he say honey please come to say hello to sister I was very, that was my first impression,

and his wife come to say hello to me and she was very nice and then when I see the whole family I know that they come from a very good family. So I would stay there and they would treat me like I was their own sister, and most of them come to talk with me because they come here without family too, so we became a brother and sister like that. And then I think a week after my sister-in-law she was very concerned about me, she wanted me to stay with her, she thought Illinois was too cold, I should be there with her, I thought that I wanted to visit with her but I never feel like I want to stay with her at all. And then she send the ticket to me so I flew to visit her and then I go and met the monk and the monk was very kind, very warm to me, and also I met my cousin who her husband was a province leader in *Kompong Chhnang* province and she wanted me to stay with her and I just don't like that stay at all because it was too depressing because I see a lot of people they didn't do nothing but thinking about money. It was kind of too much as a matter of fact I don't know how to do the business I might as well just sell my clothes I can't do it. I stay there for a week, I call Mary and she asked me. I forget to tell you I met Mary in the camp, she was very good to me, when she left she gave me a hundred *Baht*. And I called Mary and asked her if I could come to be here in Connecticut, because my idea was I just want to go to school to work in the hospital. And she say yes, but she had no money to pay for the airfare for me, this is how it became a cross-cultural misunderstanding, I never expected her to pay for my ticket either, but she feel like maybe I asked her to pay for it because I came to the country with empty hands and how am I going to have money, but the whole idea was a misunderstanding, I kind of got upset with her I say you know why shy make such a big deal, but you see this is not a Cambodia this is an American system, the money you have to know where you gonna buy and how much they give to you, as a matter of fact, I'm not know Mary too long and she is not my family, I don't expect her to pay that for me, I told her I say that is OK I have money for airplane my sister-in-law bought a ticket for me one way cost \$380, because we didn't make a reservation. So I came to the airport I took airplane from Long Beach to Connecticut and I don't know where the west or east is at all, I didn't know that I had to change planes because when I came to St. Louis and a lot of people got off the airplane and I don't know if I have to go get off the plane or not, luckily I have one gentleman who was sitting next to me, he was a lawyer and he was raised in Connecticut, so I talked to him a little bit, and then he say don't worry about that I say would you please check my ticket and see if I have to get off and change planes, he say no you are all set, you gonna go direct from Long Beach to Connecticut. I think he know because my English also he know right away that I was a refugee, and he was very respect to me, he knew I was nervous and he told me he say; who gonna come to pick me up, I say well I have a friend she gonna come to pick me up, and he say don't worry I am gonna stay with you until your friend comes and pick you up. Because Connecticut is not too big at all it is a very small state, so that was very nice and comforting that he would talk to me like that. And when I came to Connecticut you know I'm not dressed like I wear in the camp, I wear pants and blouse, decent and Mary she couldn't recognize who I am and she saw me and she

come to pick me up and we go to stay with her. And then again I stay with her one night and she was on vacation so I had to stay with her mother she was 67 years old and she used to live alone in the big house in the forest and she not used to people around her so it was very strange, she been scared very often because when I walk I didn't make noise and I walk so soft, so I would scare her so many times and she didn't know how to make food for me she didn't know how my gonna eat and she kept watching me every step, like I would open the refrigerator she was afraid I didn't know how to close it, I am a little bit paranoid so I say why does she have to watch me all the time like that.

Q. What happened to your niece and son?

A. Well when I was in *Khao-I-Dang* camp, I received a letter from my family, so I know they was alive and since then I have contacted with them, all the way until now. But right now they are both in a school, my niece she gonna become a teacher, professor and my son, he gonna go to college now in Cambodia, and I received a letter from both of them at onetime. Q. How did your father die, was it from old age?

A. He was old and I think he had his dysentery and died.

Q. Were your father and family in the concentration camp?

A. They live in the concentration camp too, but they was better than me, because I was in *Pursat* province which was a very traumatic concentration camp and a lot of people were killed during that time and some journalist's would say *Pursat* province, you can build the house by just using the bones of the people, because a lot of bone, if you wanted to plant something, if you dig you see the bone, every step.

Q. You described a lot of traumatic events, did you personally see any one murdered by the *Khmer Rouge*?

A. Yes I do, one time I think the people who came from another part to stay in the our part, over there they treat them different, they have more freedom and when they come to *Pursat* province, very tight. They would start to say, because they don't know the rules in *Pursat* province at all so they start to say, well you know in my place we eat better, we have more freedom not like here so cruel this and that. Then those people plan to escape, I think around 10 people, but I think maybe 50 meters far from me, first I saw the communist put them, they caught them and put them in line and lie straight and then they ask them to take the clothes off and I saw them pull the knife and cut, that was around at least 10 people including the women and children. I was just shaken.

Q. Did you ever see or hear about any of the women being raped or attacked by any of the people?

- A. By the communist leader yes. They would sneak in to sleep with the woman, I heard but I didn't see directly, but the people would say he would go and he would sleep with her, but she can't say, because if she say she would get killed too.
- Q. When you were in the concentration camps could you distinguish between mental and physical torture?
- A. Oh I think a lot was physical torture and mental torture during the concentration camp. The people would tell you that if you don't do the way they want they would get killed, they do a lot of things like that or they would ask you to kill somebody, if you don't kill they would kill you, a lot of those things like that.
- Q. What would you say was the worse?
- A. Mental was worse than physical but not too far behind one another.
- Q. Why do you say that?
- A. Because the people have been afraid all the time, been scared all the time by all the words said and you don't know who say that. The people keep say *Angkar, Angkar*, you don't do this, they gonna do like this if you don't do this, just a secret, mentally torture, secretly you don't know who make this rule, but in your mind you keep worrying all the time. Before the sunset, in my part I'm sure that the other part is different, that is what in the future I want to interview the people that come from different part of Cambodia. Mental torture is worse because the people between 1975 thru 1976, almost the same, physical torture and mental torture almost the same, especially in my place where I live. Before the sunset every body looked so sad because they don't know that they was gonna take, the communist gonna murder them tonight or next night, so the people live day by day and physical torture they would ask you to work even though they see you at, you work farming for me or you gonna fall down and die, they don't care, they say you keep going. If not they use the stick or they say that they will kill you. Some people they have to do it until they drop dead.
- Q. You described a lot of awful things happen to you, is there one experience that stands out in your mind?
- A. I think the worse for experience I had for now because my mind is not numb like before, by torturing the people mentally and physically and training, brainwashing the people to become jealousy to break the trust, I think that would be the worse one.
- Q. What event was the worse one for you?
- A. The most upsetting event they would separate my family, I never had a chance to be with my family. I wouldn't mind as long as I could stay with my family, I can take

care of them.

Q. One of the things you didn't mention is you were separated from your husband early on and you said later you eventually found your husband, did that happen after you moved to Connecticut?

A. I can't talk about it on tape.

Q. When your talking about the separation, the reason I brought up your husband is that, was it the separation from your husband or the separation from you father or relatives or was it just everything?

A. Well I think the separation for me was when I was separated from my mother. That comes first.

Q. What happened to your grandmother?

A. She died right before the war. She had a complete traditional death.

Q. What happened to your brother-in-law, the pilot?

A. He died, I don't know what happened. I think they had tricked him

Q. What was the happiest moment for you under the communist?

A. During the communist the most happy time that I would come home and have some food, that I give it to my mom and my sister, because all the time I would put it in my pocket and bring it to them.

Q. The final question, in terms of the trauma story, what you have been saying is that the new people, you were one of the new people, where the old people treated differently under the communist from the new people or were they treated the same?

A. Well back in the beginning I think they treated the old people different from the new people, the reason I am saying that is because the old people always had extra food to eat, and the old people you hardly ever see those people thin. They are always in good health, in good condition.

Q. Did the old people have to work in the rice fields and sleep on the ground like the new people?

A. They do, they have more ability, more medicine, if they need anything will talk and it is easy, but I don't.

Q. Being an old person basically it means you are a communist?

A. Being an old person means that you joined with the communist a long time before.

- Q. Do you think that the communist in these camps, were they really trying to create a new society or do you think they were gradually trying to kill all the new people?
- A. Well I think now I think from my idea, after I came here look back to Cambodia, I think the communist, force anger between the poor and the rich, a long time ago not recently, it come from a lot of things it comes from religion, it come from generation to generation and then the people want to have power.
- Q. These camps that where organized, which a lot of people died, where the camps organized to produce and to turn people into communist's or where these camps created to kill the people slowly but surely?
- A. Well I think, maybe I am wrong, that is why I didn't understand *Pol Pot* the one who created this, and *Jeang Sary* and *Khiew Samphan* color like very accusing, I think they begin this project, I don't think they honest to one another, I almost say that maybe at the end they would betray one another to have power, like in Cambodia usually say that in the forest they can have only one tiger they can't have two. The communist in Cambodia it turn out to be crazy not realistic because first you hear the world say that the reason they want the country change because they just want everybody equal, no rich no poor so we all have the same and then when they go to that step, and then they want more than that. They keep create, *Angkar*, *Pol Pot* say this say that, I didn't even know who was *Pol Pot* who was *Angkar*, they may not know either.
- Q. But the way you describe your story is that little by little people were dying, why couldn't they create a work camp where people worked hard, learned how to be communist but also enough to eat and had good housing, why couldn't they have created a healthier situation for the new people?
- A. The reason they do that is because they say but I don't know if it is the truth or not, but told everybody the new people that the new people are the people who have a better life, so we have to train them to work hard to know how to stay without too much food, something like that because the old people they think that they was well trained already, so by 1977 or 1978, that time the old people tried to wake up, because, the real leader of the communist first they create, they try to kill the new people without using a knife or bullet they would let them starve, if that is not gonna kill them, they would do another plan.
- Q. So you think they were killing the new people little by little
- A. Oh, Yes.

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Interview 4 - Part 4

- Q. How did the communist party organize work in the camps?
- A. As far as my experience and my knowledge, I think the communist organized their work very secretly. They wouldn't let anybody know about it they would go to a few people and talk and then after that they would send a rule to the people.
- Q. Basically, how was the work organized in the camps you worked in, what did you do, when did you start, how did you do, what kind of work did you do?
- A. In the camp, because I didn't have a baby, almost like a mother, thru and thru, I will work from different places and different jobs. Sometime I would work in the garden, plantation by carrying the water, and then sometimes they would send me to the rice field to grow the rice and cut the rice and sometime they would send me to the forest, cut the leaves to make the roof for the house. Usually, if you work in the garden you have to get up before the sunrise to go to work and you don't have a chance to break until lunch time, we have a half hour for lunch time and then you go back to work again until 6 or 7 o'clock and then sometime at night if you want extra food they would ask you to go to work like from 7 to 10 o'clock to dig the canal. When I was working in the rice field I have to get up sometimes 2 or 3 o'clock because the rice field is not too close to our place so we have to walk miles by the time we saw the rice field the sun had risen already. So working it seemed almost, basically from 3 or 4 o'clock until 6 or 7 o'clock.
- Q. When you had worked, did you have the proper tools and equipment, did they make everything available for you to work?
- A. Yes they do, they have tools and equipment that you could use.
- Q. In some photographs or pictures, one of the things you would see is that instead of animals they would use people, is this correct?
- A. Yes, when the people do something wrong or they don't like them, they would use the people just like an animal to plow the land before they plant the rice if you move slow they would abuse you physically by hitting you with a stick, something like that.
- Q. Would people work individually or in gangs, groups of people or individuals working alone.
- A. Groups.
- Q. Did they ever give the people any spare time, did you have any time to yourself?

A. No they don't, the first year 1975 they give the spare time for the people only new year, so they make a lot of food, you can eat all you can possibly eat but you cannot bring it home, and other than that there was no spare time. Even though you sick, it is gonna be very difficult because if you get sick often they say that you make believe that you are sick you are not sick, so a lot of time people would get killed by staying home being sick often.

Q. Do you mean from the sickness or the communist would kill them?

A. They would kill them.

Q. Did you ever see any people die while they were working?

A. I saw the people who working and then he fell down and died the old man who he tried to work, he was very thin he couldn't pull his feet from one step to another step, because the land was so thick, muddy and he fell down and he passed away.

Q. Under the communist, what was the relationship between women and their husbands, could you live with your husband, could you visit or talk or sleep with your husband?

A. Well you could talk with your husband but very often they split to, they have husband and wife to work separate fields, it is unlikely that they would let you stay together. If you work separate places you cannot come home, but once in a while they would give you the permission to be together.

Q. What was the relationship between the children and the mother and father?

A. The children and the mother, it is kind of tough because communist would tell the children, all of them belong to *Angkar*, and not their parents anymore because right now the *Angkar* take care of them by providing food and clothes, everything, so they should not listen to their parents, they should listen to *Angkar*, and do what their told to do. So it is very sad to see the parents lost their position and the children turn against their parents.

Q. What would the children do against the parents?

A. This is, I am talking about young children like only 10 years something like that, again by they not listening to the parents, they would be mouthy to the parents, and they won't do what the parents told them and if their parents say something that hurt them they would say that I'm gonna tell *Angkar* about that.

Q. With your niece and your son did you have any problems at all? Did they try to

talk your son and niece against you?

- A. Well they keep asking my son to say that, what is your father doing, is he camp leader, what kind of job, but my son is very young and he doesn't know too much about us, but I keep telling him, I say that; before I was ???, my husband was carpenter, I was ???, something like that.
- Q. One of the stories you hear is that sometimes that they use the children to kill people?
- A. The teenagers, yes they do because in my concentration camp place we have a young woman, I don't know if you saw the killing field, she is young like her, and she would kill 100's of people. The communist basically they would use the children to do what they want; instead of you the old people because the children they would move faster, take your order and go and do it.
- Q. How would the parents deal with the fact that their children could betray them?
- A. I think most of the family just cannot help them during the four years in the concentration camp; it is very difficult for them to get an idea how do they want their children, how do they want to treat their children, it is kind of very difficult for them to cope with it, because the first thing on their mind is food and surviving. So human being through sin had lost a lot.
- Q. What was the personal hygiene like in the camps, in terms of being able to take a bath, take care of your hair, and take care of your menstrual period, what was it like being a woman in these camps?
- A. We have no toothpaste or nothing and the women and men in term of cleaning the teeth, they will use tobacco, it is very good it make your teeth clean or just a piece of cloth to brush your teeth. For the hair I think they burn the leave of a palm and another plant, I don't know in English what it is called, they burn it and put the water and it became just like soap, and they wash their hair. And they have nothing to wash their clothes, and after 1975, a lot of woman don't have their period anymore, so they have nothing to worry about that. Very few people had died because they have not menstruated, it gave them a lot of trouble.
- Q. What about the clothing, I heard people say they had no clothes, did you have to wear the same clothes?
- A. Yes they wear the same clothes. Like I would go to work today and then my clothes would get soaked wet and would dry and I go to sleep in the same clothes, and in the morning I would go with the same clothes back to work.

- Q. Again, what was the logic of the communist that people couldn't be clean or they couldn't have more clothes?
- A. I really don't know the reason why they didn't provide clothes enough to the people, but I think their rule what they make it, I think that as far as I understand, they just want to make the people uncomfortable, miserable so they think that they have power. If they want to give you clothes you get clothes, if they don't give you clothes you can't have clothes.
- Q. In terms of the food, who cooked, what kind of food did you eat, was it good, how did the communist organize the distribution of food?
- A. Well the distribution of food they have a kitchen and they have a few women and men cook so the whole group have to eat in the same place, the same food. And sometime the food the way they cook no meat no nothing, most of the time it is just banana tree and with the tamarind and with salt and with rice and water. I remember that we have no rice, only corn, so you could imagine it was very difficult for the old people have no teeth that have to chew this corn and sometimes 125 pieces or 110 for just one meal. And beside that people would cook the leave mostly like morning glory.
- Q. Did the communist give the people enough to eat?
- A. They don't.
- Q. So you would eat and still be hungry?
- A. Oh yes you would be still hungry. Like the old people sometime from 8 o'clock until 11 o'clock (in the afternoon) they would sit and hold an empty bottle in front of the house waiting for the food.
- Q. Would they have meat like fish and chicken?
- A. Very few times, like maybe 10%.
- Q. How would the food affect people, would it give them diarrhea, did it make them sick?
- A. Yes, the beginning of the fall of the country 1975, the first time the people still kind of have their own food they can eat and when they give up the kitchen to prepare the food for the group, sometime they cook the corn, just corn nothing else, and when they change the food like that a lot of people got diarrhea until after maybe a couple of months and then they got normal again. And the food wasn't clean, all dirty.

Q. How was it like to work all day and then eat this food, how did it affect your body?

A. I think it does effect my body but I think the way you work, exercise, it kind of helps a lot. Help your mind think better, not worrying about being crazy, it is kind of healthy included the food even for very little, but if you put some leave and cook with it, sometime after you eat, right away you still survive even though you are very thin, as long as you keep working. A lot of people during the communist they were sick; they were exhausted they say; well I sick I can't go to work, I stay home, but those people the majority would die, die not because of weakness.

Q. So somehow the work protected you from dying?

A. Yes the work exercised you.

Q. How did the communist arrange marriages, what was their attitude toward marriage?

A. The way they would arrange marriage, they would pick how many people, then they say that; I will arrange you with this guy or this woman, so you have no choice. And then they arrange sometime 5 couple or sometimes 10 couples and they make the food, and then they just hold their hand and that's it. At night, some of them would investigate if those two where in love with one another or what, they would do like that.

Q. What do you mean by investigate?

A. They would come and listen, if both of you agree to be husband wife or not, because it is a rough marriage the way they fix one another without letting them know who he is or she is.

Q. You never had that problem, they tried but, you told the story about that.

A. Yes.

Q. How come you got through all of this without being forced into a marriage?

A. As I mentioned before they was forcing me to marry too, but I told them that I heard my husband was alive, and three communist took me to a very quiet place far away from the village and they asked me they say that; are you telling me the truth that your husband is alive, I say; yes, and he say that; how about if I found out he not alive, I told him, I say that; I would give you my life. But I think

something on top of that helping me, just by telling them they shouldn't be giving me any choice, but I think something miracle, something happened that I my fortune would not go through that situation, I believe that, because somebody could say like me, no I'm gonna force you to marry anyway and you have no choice.

- Q. What about a pregnancy, what kind of help would they give or how would they deal with women who are pregnant?
- A. Well, the woman who is pregnant they will kind of give them a little bit break, and you can ask the *Angkar*, say like if you want to have a papaya or something like that, they would allow you to have it or you want to eat a chicken they would give you a chicken, but not often just one time. After the woman have the baby they have no milk because the food deficiency.
- Q. Then what would happen to the baby?
- A. Well the baby is very thin and a lot of the time the baby would die.
- Q. So a lot of these babies died?
- A. Yes. And then again they not have a lot of babies especially the new people they don't have a baby because they have no period anyway because of the food deficiency but most the old people get pregnant.
- Q. Would they have the same problem that the baby died or would they be better?
- A. They be a little bit better.
- Q. One of the things I never understood did the old people have the same lack of food, the same lack of clothing, the same problem as the new people or did they have more anything?
- A. They had more because they not hesitant to ask, they know how to ask they know the system.
- Q. Would the old people eat with the new people together in the same kitchen?
- A. Yes they can eat privately at their house nobody would bother them.
- Q. The new people had to eat in a group?
- A. Yes and during that time the old people come to join to but they may go home and have other things.

Q. Did the communist have a system or principals for preserving health and preventing disease, did they have any medicine or how did they take care of people who are sick, what was their medical system?

A. Their medical system was traditional medicine. A lot of time the people who would have fever they would use the medicine that come from the animal in the forest those things we used before in Cambodia, back before the war was very helpful when you drink that you see they scratch a rock with the raw ice water and then you drink it and it reduces the temperature. And if you have a disease like myself, my hand they would use coconut with the gallbladder from a python. Also I heard they used the gallbladder from the people too, when they kill people because they say that is very powerful, cure a disease like that.

Q. There are stories that the Khmer Rouge would eat the live or the gallbladder, they would eat people too, did you know that was happening while you were there?

A. Yes it was happening because it would make them strong, make them tough. Sometime they soak the gallbladder of people with the wine and they would drink it something like that. They say that it make their skin, protect their skin like if you want to hit them with a knife, it won't go through to their skin, that is what the people believe.

Q. Before the communist, did you ever hear that in Cambodian tradition people eating the liver and gallbladder, where did they get this idea from?

A. No I never hear that, but I think the top people they may do something like that because otherwise the poor people won't have an idea that when you eat a gallbladder off the people would make you tough, something like that.

Q. When someone got sick was there a hospital or infirmary, what happened if someone was very sick and was dying what would the Khmer Rouge do?

A. Well somebody is sick, sometime they take to the hospital and sometime no they die at home, they die nobody go to ask this and that they just sick and die at home. And by 1977, a lot of people died at home and they didn't even wrap them with something they just took them and plan go to bury it, they don't care anymore because the hospital they have nothing no medicine either.

Q. What about religion, could you go to the Pagoda, were you able to worship the Buddha, what was the religion of the communist?

A. None, no religion.

- Q Say you had a gold medallion of the Buddha, what would happen to you?
- A. No, you can't wear it because they don't believe in it, they would throw the Buddha away, they put the blame to the Buddha, so that is why the Cambodia been called the communist as the regime without religion. They don't want religion, they destroy the religion.
- Q. What about the monks, what happened to all the monks?
- A. The monks they would force them to take all the monk outfits and they would force them to kill the animals that is against the rules of the monks, they would never kill anything, but the communist forced them to kill the ox, the chickens or if not they would kill them.
- Q. The monks don't eat meat, are they vegetarians?
- A. They eat meat but they eat before 12 o'clock.
- Q. If someone believed in God or the Buddha, for instance in you situation, say you wanted to pray, how would you?
- A. You do pray, but you not pray in public where everybody know that you pray, sometime you go to the forest or you pray at home, meditate in your mind. You cannot pray in front of the people, they know that you do Buddhism practices.
- Q. Do you think a lot of people were secretly praying?
- A. I do because a lot of people would hate the regime without religion because Cambodia practiced the Buddha a long time of go, so you can't change your mind unless the young generation.
- Q. Did they teach the people communism, did they try to teach the people the theories of communism?
- A. Yes they do.
- Q. How would they do that?
- A. They would have a conference meeting, teach them what they should do. For instance, wedding something like that they say; why you have to go through all the wedding, pay for this and that, this should be a short period and they say that you should not believe religion, the monks, the person doesn't make sense at all. They would tell that not to be loyal to their parents the people they should be loyal is the high organization. And they would tell you that between the rich and the

poor it is very difficult they would say the poor people never have anything all their life, but the rich people always have a good life, and for that matter you should not like them you should push them to practice as hard as you so you could be equal.

- Q. What was the main teachings that people are all equal, the poor and the rich are equal?
- A. They should be equal and they also want to criticize the rich people, they try to say that. You may tell the communist that I know so and so and he was very rich and he abused people by blah, blah, blah and the communist found out and they would punish them, put them to work harder, more than the other, or they would kill them. So a lot of people had been killed by just from their own people who told about their history to the communist.
- Q. You mean that other people would betray them. Do you think that was a big issue under the Khmer Rouge that there was a lot of betrayal, that Cambodians would betray each other?
- A. A lot, but as I mentioned, that is what the communist want.
- Q. How did the communist control the people, what techniques did they use to control what people did or thought?
- A. Well, the communist are very clever to control the people because they don't have to use anything yet or do anything at all, just talk very soft, they say that; if you against the wheel of *Angkar*, high organization, you will get hit by the wheel, so you be careful.
- Q. What do you mean the wheel?
- A. The wheel for example, you drive the car if somebody had the car will run over you and you get killed.
- Q. So another words if you don't listen to *Angkar* you may get killed at any time by some accident?
- A. You do anything opposite to what *Angkar* expect.
- Q. Basically, they told people that if they didn't do what they wanted an accident would happen and they would die?
- A. Yes and they have to believe that because they have been told a few people had never returned. So for that purpose it make the people even more aware about

what's gonna happen if they do anything opposite to *Angkar's* expectation.

Q. So they were afraid that they would be killed if they disobeyed the orders?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there a resistance movement in Cambodia against the Khmer Rouge, where there people who had guns and were fighting back, between 1975 and 1979, or was there no resistance?

A. No action really during that time, not that I know.

Q. So the communist had complete control of the country?

A. Yes, until the Vietnamese came.

Q. How would they punish the people, what technique would they use to punish people who didn't obey their rules?

A. Well, maybe they murder you or they may don't give you food to eat or they may ask you to work triple, they give you more work than you can handle, and they give you a time table, they sat that you have to finish by this time or else.

Q. Again, what I heard is that most of the killing, when they would kill people they would do it secretly, rarely would they kill someone in front of other people, is that right they would take them off somewhere?

A. Yes they would disappear because I still remember during that time the Vietnamese took over and it was before April and I think the radios announced the Cambodia now free so you go to the place that you belong to. And the people really get excited at that time they was collecting all their belongings they gonna go to the part where they live. And during that time, the communist stopped them, this is the story I heard from the men who worked with me in the plantation and he is kind of old people too. And then the communist stopped and say fine friend we'll let you go, now get in the ox cart we'll take you to the place that you belong to, but they split the women different from the men and then they go to the forest and when they come back they would use the men to wash their hands something like that and after that they took the women and children and they bring back only the clothes. I don't know why the communist before they kill the people they have to take all their clothes off, I have no idea.

Q. Did you ever witness or hear of about them rape a woman, that women were being raped, sexually attacked?

- A. I really not have too much information about it.
- Q. Were women afraid of being raped?
- A. Well they were worried too because I think the people who come from the city, the men who did organize with the communist, they never come to the city, so I am sure that when they see the women come from the city they have an eye on them, so they just want to think sometime they could sneak and do something they want. And the women are very scared about it and they have to be very careful, they cannot talk with the men in the place that there is nobody else otherwise they will be accused that they was in love and they would kill both of them. And it is very often that they would kill both of them because they thought that they both in love without letting the *Angkar* know.
- Q. Being a woman in the camp, did you have to be afraid that people would take sexual advance of you, could a man or a communist just say I want that woman to have sex with her?
- A. I didn't see it.
- Q. So you were never really afraid that a communist was going to rape you or to force you to have sex?
- A. I didn't recall too much, but I may have been afraid but not overwhelmed, because during that time you feeling already you haven't thought too much about the sex.
- Q. I have seen slides where women were being raped and killed, and all kinds of terrible things were happening to them.
- A. Those are the ones that I mentioned that they was in love. See like the man who I mentioned before he was in love with me, during that time, I was scared that maybe he would rape me, something like that and they would kill me. That is the only time I was afraid, but other than that I didn't recall too much. But a lot of people have been killed both men and women because the *Angkar* think they was in love to one another.
- Q. Why would *Angkar* kill a man and woman if they were in love?
- A. I guess they just don't want them to produce any small babies, maybe I don't know, it seem like their rule, I think when you have power you have to make some rules so that the people do what you tell them because otherwise you have no power.
- Q. Do you think there was a lot of honor amongst the new people. That they tried to

respect each other and help each other or do you think that the new people took advantage of the situation too?

A. In terms of sex, Yes, some of the new people took advantage.

Q. Do you feel in a situation like this that the new people would try to respect each other and not hurt each other or did you find that people would steal from each other?

A. They would betray, that happened very often.

Q. What do you think about that?

A. I think when you stay in a situation like that, I think you have no sense what's so ever what is wrong, and I think the reason that people do it is because first they may get a word from the communist, that is, I want you to find out, they do searching, the people who are they. They may use food as tool to search for people who have education, so they could kill those people. Because those are the ones who are the enemy to the communist. So a lot of people would trade their life for anything, for food.

Q. Where there other people who would say; I would rather die than betray my brother or family, where there a lot of people who took the opposite position?

A. With the family it is not, I don't see too much betrayal, you have a strong, but it would be other people.

Q. So in a way a Cambodian couldn't trust other Cambodians even if they were not communists, even if they were in the same terrible situation, you couldn't trust each other?

A. No the children couldn't trust the parents and the parents couldn't trust the children, the children would steal the food from the parents and the parents would steal the food the children, also husband and wife.

Q. The adults couldn't trust each other either, like if someone knew you were rich they could go and tell?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that women were treated worse than men by the communist?

A. Well in part, it seemed the same.

- Q. Did you notice where there any woman who helped the communist who were active communists, was all the punishment and the killing done by just communist men or were there women who were also involved in running the camps?
- A. I believe there were women too. A lot of woman were very angry.
- Q. Is that traditional, in Cambodian society, what do you make of it as a woman being in that powerful position, hurting people?
- A. In Cambodian society, frankly, from my own experience I think the men present very strong and powerful in front of public, but really the woman is mostly in charge.
- Q. So you think in these communist camps there was a lot of powerful women who were influencing what was going on in the camps, it wasn't just the male?
- A. At the beginning, I think I believe it was a lot of men, but when you talking about a concentration camp it is different, half the women and mostly the young women who never knew what a city looked like, they all brainwashed and on their mind is the thinking, these people are enemies because they have a more comfortable life than we are. The kids you could brainwash better than the old people.
- Q. Why do you think the communist organized their new society this way, what was their reason?
- A. Well I think the reason, because I've been searching, I still continue, because I deserve to find out a solution to explain to the young generation why and what. As far as I understand, I think the way *Pol Pot* made the statement, and I look to a lot of Cambodian leaders before, I think it is power because the people just want power. Also on top of that they are crazy too.
- Q. What do you mean crazy?
- A. I mean the power, the crazy, I cannot believe that if you want power you don't have to kill a whole lot of people, you have logically, and you have a thing that you not leave for another sixty year or one hundred years, you have to know that you gonna die soon by sixty or eighty, but somebody have to take over, so why do you want to kill all the people, you want to destroy everything and then you think you gonna last forever to control the whole world.
- Q. Where were the intellectuals, the leaders, the *Pol Pot*, *Kiev Samphorn*, did you ever see any of the national leaders in your camps, were these people taking orders from *Pol Pot* or did they invent these camps on their own, what do you think happened?

- A. *Kiev Samphorn* and *Pol Pot*, I definitely never see them in the camp, I had only seen *Pol Pot* picture when I was in the concentration camp. But it seemed these people was started by *Pol Pot* who was called *Pol Pot's* name in France, he beginning to develop the communist society and after that I think *Kiev Samphorn* whom would get involved with it. If you back to read all the stories, these people have been hurt before. Like *Kiev Samphorn* as far as I recall originally, his parents have suffered a lot, they put him in the jail and they abused him a lot, something like that.
- Q. What I don't understand is that when you listen to these stories of these camps all over Cambodia, they sound very similar and it sounds like there was some national organization and that these were smaller units in the national idea, in other words, these weren't just people who had gone crazy, they had organized the whole system, that these concentration camps were part of a larger system that was organized from somewhere, did you get any sense that the communist leaders were going to *Battambang* or *Phnom Penh* for training?
- A. They do training everywhere, they very powerful, you can say that it is national, because a lot of people fall in love to the communist goal because they think that, some people don't like the *Lon Nol* regime either because they think that, I had one patient who told me that they saw the *Lon Nol* soldiers abuse the people who have small bag of vegetable and try to sell the market because she have no money to pay the tax, they kick her out, and then when *Kiev Samphorn* he was related to *Kiev Samphorn* too.
- Q. The question of why this happened, one of the interesting questions today is, for instance, what happened to the Khmer Rouge people and the old people today, do you think they have any regret for the killing, I am wondering what happened to all these people who worked with the communist?
- A. They are scared now. I don't know how much sense of security that they have but they are very scared because they are afraid that they found out about them they would put them on trial.
- Q. But do you think a lot went to the refugee camps and came to America and other places?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What do you think these people are thinking now, say your Khmer Rouge and came to America, what's going on with these people now?
- A. Well, I think somehow the way they look is no different, you can see him nervous,

and they just try to avoid to see you or to talk, brought up anything or discuss with you. A couple of years ago, the monk in Rhode Island, they have asked him to quit because they thought he was Khmer Rouge, I don't understand, I haven't talked to the monk. But I think from my point, the Khmer Rouge during the communist, a lot of them are very cruel, kill a lot of people, but some of them are very nice too, not 100% Khmer Rouge are cruel, some of them they really help you. They came here I think they very afraid because this a free country if they do anything and anybody saw them and they have enough witness and they would be in trouble. But if you ask me a question, what are gonna do with the *Khmer Rouge* if you see them. If they have a mental problem, they come to see me, what I am gonna do, I am not gonna hate them because I believe that the people do something wrong, because something going on, not because the people meant it. So I think I would work with the Khmer Rouge without blaming them just like I work with the Cambodian people and I would find some way by using Buddhism philosophy to deal with it, I would talk to them, soon as they trust me and they told me, they say that; I was Khmer Rouge, killed a lot of people, I would say yes you know you killed a lot of people but I don't blame you. I think that may happen in the near future. I think you gonna have to catch them because they will not talk or discuss with you about that because right now even though in Cambodia they are Khmer Rouge they not willing to tell the truth.

- Q. I wonder how many families, the wife knows or the children know, the family knows that they were Khmer Rouge, but the rest of the community doesn't know, I wonder how common that is, what is it like to be a Khmer Rouge family in America right now?
- A. I think they could never feel the same like the other people, because I'm sure that they have a lot of guilt, a lot of regret, a lot of scaring. You never feel the same, but if they don't kill the people that won't be different, but if they kill the people they never be the same.
- Q. And also I would think a lot of Americans would say isn't that terrible what happened what the Khmer Rouge did, they would have to lie about it, they would say yes that is terrible, because the American people are very anticommunist, so it must be very difficult for the Khmer Rouge.
- A. See you have to be isolated from the people because if you gonna try to find connection maybe sometime you hit somebody who know you, and you be in trouble.
- Q. In our clinic, it never comes up, we never ask, it has never been an issue, but I would suspect a lot of Khmer Rouge would of have escaped to other countries too?

- A. Oh yes, that why when we was in the camp a lot of people get mad with immigration because they let the Khmer Rouge in and not let the non Khmer Rouge. They excuse the people who stay in the camp.
- Q. Why would they except the Khmer Rouge first, because they were the healthiest and they could leave the country the easiest?
- A. No, I think the immigration, they have no sense of understanding the concept or the fairness or the truth at all. Like if you go to unemployment, they give you the paper you have to fill out what they want. If you say the truth is, I was a full time student, who care about you just fill the form and give to me.
- Q. But why would they accept the Khmer Rouge first?
- A. They don't know. I am sure if they know, they have a reason enough and they won't let them in.
- Q. Well the thing that is impressive is how organized the camps were and how they were all the same, all over the country some were worse than others but wouldn't you say they all sound the same. Do you know about this project for the Well court the one David Hawks and other people are doing?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you give testimony to that, isn't there some Cambodian people in France taking all kinds of testimony and trying to look at all the different facts?
- A. David Hawks who sent the paper to us, and he sent attached with a lot of Cambodian names, I saw it this morning about *Pol Pot*.
- Q. I was reading somewhere they were looking at the different atrocities, I guess there was one region where the killing was worse than anywhere else. (Svang responds).
- Q. Well, we are coming to end of interview.
- A. I cannot think.
- Q. You are tired? You do not have to say anything.
- A. No, I have to respond other wise in the future I'll not recall. Well I think all this experience that I have been through with the *Khmer Rouge*, and all the learning that I have learned when I came here to this country and also the experience in the camps, also my experience working with the Cambodian people, I have some kind

of understanding that the problem among Cambodian, it is extremely difficult to find out, it is gonna take a long time to understand even though I was Cambodian myself, because as you mentioned these people physically, mentally torture and distrust and also the close system the Cambodian never talked to one another, and that is very difficult to hear, unless they get to talk to one another. As I mentioned before they have people who came before the war and after the war and during the war, all kinds of people that have different experiences but they all have traumatized the same and they should share their experience and the difficulty and after that they can be loose to one another, not to see one another look like, you enemy with me before or not.

Q. So you think there is a lot of mistrust in the Cambodian community?

A. A lot of mistrust, yes. The story needs to be told.

Q. The story we never hear is the story by the *Khmer Rouge*, we never hear the communist story, what were these people thinking, *Pol Pot* never told the story, *Khiev Samphorn* never told the story, these *Khmer Rouge* have never told the story, don't you think we need to know that story?

A. You need to know that story, that is why I am so grateful about David Hawks and and *Haing Ngor* and *Dith Pran*, the project, they gonna put *Pol Pot* on trial, because I think this is very important for the Cambodian people, otherwise if the *Pol Pot* dies, we never find out why, what all this history, and destroy the Cambodia and we owe the young generation tell them what it is, otherwise you can't help the Cambodian. You have to find out why and what. Just like the armed control you have to question that and I'm sure that time *Pol Pot* gonna say; so and so get involved, this and that and then you get the whole book and the Cambodian's can read that and they say; well this isn't what happened in 1975, so you better be careful.

Q. We don't know how much China was involved, we don't know anything.

A. But if you put *Pol Pot* on trial he may say that, I think it is very important that they put him on trial, but they say that they don't how long he gonna live because he has cancer. Isn't that amazing to you that these people killed a million Cambodian's and they came here (USA) and stay like a king.

Q. They are still being supported by the American government and China, it is amazing.

A. Now even though the Cambodia and the U.S. the politicians they have a lot of party, different party, mostly the men run in politics, and they not quite sure what side they gonna take, they just have no idea at all, very confusing.

Q. Thank you, you covered a lot of ground, today.

A. I hope my statement was clear.

Interview 4 - Part 5

Q. In your village, for instance if your grandmother or father passed away, what would be the traditional way of dealing with that?

A. This is from my family's point of view. When somebody died my family would go to invite a monk to come and pray and we make a lot of food for the monk. We all sit and listen to the monk and usually the monk will council by using words and explain how the people born and people grow old and die, sick and die, that is the expectation when the people die. Usually the monk council us that you should not be attached to the people who die too much because when they die it seem they relieved from pressure all their life that they have to deal with. But you people, the one who alive that need to deal, that need to go more, you have to be just worry about yourself more than the people who died. I think at night, we will keep the body, one night, three nights, it depends, at night the Cambodian priest will come and will sing the whole night and some guest's will come too to be a part with it. When we ready to take them to bury or burn them, we left the family see the body and then we put them in their grave, we'll have like a cart or car and we'll have four or eight monks and sit along side the coffin. The family the relative will be there and we'll go there all together from the house to Pagoda, and before we burn them they would let the family see the face of the body again and they put, some people bury, usually most people bury the body, mostly Chinese, but Cambodian's very common that they will burn them. And then after all the body was burned, in the evening the family usually the close family like the son or husband or wife will go and pick the bones and wash with the coconut water, and put with the rice cloth and sometime they would bring it home, but my family would bring it home and we would rub the bone with the paper we call gold paper and then put it in the plate that have a cover and bring it to the Pagoda and the monk will keep it. Seven days later, we would have another ceremony then we would invite the monks to come and we make the food and so the monk could pray and believe the food that we make for the monk will go through to the person who die. And then my family will have to wear some sign, a lot of them would have to shave their head or sometime a lot of them would have to bring a monk for twenty-four hours it depends, sometimes just for three hours, something like that. And we believe that if the people who in the family became a monk for twenty-four hours or three hours, it depends if you are too little you may not can stay too long through twenty-four hours, so it depended how grown-up you are. And they believe that the way you do that, if the person who die is your mother or your father you pay them back by doing that. And then after the three months and a day we will have another ceremony for the person who die and we invite the monk to come and the monk will pray and council the family again, and after that we just met once a year or every new year, every memorial day we would go to the Pagoda or we would do it at home, just to recall the connection with our

family who died.

Q. I remember at the beginning of the interview you had talked about your grandmother, was she buried in the traditional way, can you remember that?

A. Yes I remember that. When my grandmother died, I was in Phnom Penh also my mom was there and they called us and we came and they keep her three days at home and we go through the process that I told you. And then when we bring her body to the Pagoda we burn her, so we took the bone and bring it home.

Q. Do you remember anything special about that funeral?

A. Well I remember that is special about the funeral that I'm the one who didn't shave my head that time because my family think I'm too young, well I am not that young I was married already, but she told me I could cut my hair but I have to hold the silver plate and put the puff rice mixed with the money and walk behind her coffin and I have to through the puff rice all along until they ride into the Pagoda. So the money that I throw away, the poor people come to pick it and the children come to pick it and then I remember that I had to come back home the old people told me that I cannot walk, like usually I have to walk backward, I have to walk with my back first until I'm home, but it is not too far the Pagoda from my house, it is quite close. I remember that at night we all sit and rub her bone, we are missing her a lot, but we recall a lot of good things because we been helping her all along, we never left her alone, we all take a turn to give her a bath, cook for her and sit with her, very respectful to her. So we feel like obligation, in terms of respect, in terms of taking care of her as family, our lovely grandmother it was completed, but we ache, somehow we still missing her a lot. And at night I would dream about her that she came and she was teasing me. I remember that I was very proud of her, that a lot of people that are not related with her at all, they will come and they will ask us for a red ??? to put in ?? because they think that she was a very good person and she have a long life and they want to die just like her. Because when my grandmother died she have no pain, she just like some banana will ripe and then fell off.

Q. Before the *Pol Pot* situation are there any funerals that stand out in your mind, anyone's that you remember specially?

A. Yes, I remember my own sister, that's the one still bothering my mind a lot. She was very sick, and during that time, my father, he was in the process of depression too because his business doesn't go well and he lost a lot of money and my sister was sick so he kind of not pay attention too much about her. So only my mother, she was very close and I think my sister kind of got upset when my father he seemed like he didn't give her attention or make her feel that he really cares about her, but again, he have a lot of his own problems, about the loss of his business.

My sister, myself was her favorite because she always asked me to do the mending for her, she taught me to do that, and when she dying I was in school, and somebody go to call me say that; my sister very sick so I have to take off school, which is not too far from my house. And I come to sit next to her and she wanted to eat some biscuit that is made from France, and I go to buy for her, and when I come home, my mom was very busy by trying to find some way to hear her by using traditional way. I think one day before she died we all very, very busy by make a lot of ??? that ??? ask her to make it, we use banana tree and cut and put the incense flower candle and we make seven steps so it was quite far because we want to pray and so she can be alive. And at night, my mom would go to the Pagoda because my sister is very sick, and she would have no way that she can deal with her, so she have to go and ask the monk who is very close to my family and the monk told my mom in the morning, he gonna come to help my family. But again, in the morning he didn't come, so we have been waiting for the monk, wondering why he didn't come because the monk is very nice, he is very helpful to our family all the time. By four o'clock in the evening my sister really she is ready to die and we call her children to come to be with her but no one of her children could be on time, can see her before she die. And then I was there, I hold her and I feel very sham that I never hold a human being they have no temperature in their body and it was so soft, they have no nothing to connect their strength, their energy, it was just like you hold the baby just born, she can't help you at all, that is a very strange feeling that I had the first time, and then she would die. Right away after she died the children came but they were not able to talk with her at all, and I remember that my mom was very upset, but she never cry, usually she always keep inside herself, she never shows to any of the children. And we look for her birth certificate because we need to go to inform the mayor. And my mother just go crazy because she is confused, she doesn't know where she keep it, she doesn't know what to do, she just keep looking in everybody's eyes and just like asked for help. And then it was a big loss of my family at that time. My brother who was in Phnom Penh, he came and he know that our family is in very, very depressed because we lost our sister, he went back to Phnom Penh and invite the monk, he's the big leader monk in Phnom Penh and the Pagoda which you call ???, it was near the white and gray building and the monk came and he was give a lot of talk, council and he was very powerful and I think he helped my family a lot. My sister, while she was crying and she listened to the monk until she laughed without us knowing that she was laughing, it kind of a lot of relief from that. And after that, for a week we have a lot of ceremony, but I think that when my grandmother died of course we miss her but it seemed that we accepted that she should die because her age and she have good care from us, but my sister I think that it is very traumatized, it is still in my mind because she shouldn't die yet because she have children that they need her and her life had been very difficult, a lot of suffering in her mind and it cost my mother a great deal because she died. The monk came and the monk told my family that the reason that he didn't come early because when right away after my mother left, he would dream

that the woman who come with the white dress told him that he could not go to my house if he will that woman gonna give him a hex and he gonna lost all his credit being a monk, he cannot be a monk anymore, so that is why when he woke up he know that he cannot save my sister's life so he don't come and he know that she gonna die anyway.

Q. As you look back to your situation under the Khmer Rouge, how do they go about dealing with people who had died?

A. During the part that I live, the Khmer Rouge they really have no way of system of dealing with the people who die at all, all they have to do if somebody die, if you can take your family very far, if you don't they have to ask somebody to come and pick it up and bury it. They have no way to let us to have any system to dealing with the people who die at home. And in the beginning of 1975, after April, it seemed they not too tight when somebody dies, you still have a whole family and go and bury or you do something a little bit better, but I think a year later it is very difficult, the people die like an animal, they don't care. Then by 1976 to 1977, it is getting worse because sometime one house they have people die one after another, and the people are very weak because they don't have enough food to eat, they cannot even carry the body and bury it. The people who they was doing just for burying the people, those people they will have enough to eat and they will take the dead people from house to house, sometimes they will put five, six or seven and put in the cart cow and then they didn't even cover them enough and then they go and they dig and bury it, they didn't even dig it deep enough so the smell would not be spread.

Q. So in your village you could smell the smell of the people who had died?

A. You could smell. And during a flood every year in my part, they have a flood and it's very difficult to drink, you drink water, how could you drink water after it drained from the body. And you walk in the streets, you can smell all the body, you get used to it, it seemed normal, you have to survive.

Q. So the smell of death was everywhere, could you see the bodies in the water?

A. Everywhere. I think it do smell, but it was during the time that they started to kill the people, I had seen the body in the water and the plantation.

Q. So when you where in the work camps, the smell of death was everywhere?

A. Yes, you afraid to go to the plantation to check how your plants grow because you know that if you go you may hit some body that is smelly, because you can smell it right away before you get in. It's too traumatizing for you to see the body because during the time that they kill the people they would take off the clothes

from the person and then they kill them, they didn't even bury them.

Q. So the bodies were not covered?

A. No not covered.

Q. You lost a number of your loved ones in these camps, were you able to do any burial for your own people, what happened in your own case?

A. In my own case I think right after the fall of the country, I mentioned in my story the first one, my nephew died and I was able to bury him but not the other. After that my brother died, and I was working in the field and I could not come back. And also my nephew, the son of my brother who drowned because he was so big and then finally he fell down in the water and died. And I didn't see him, and then my other nephew, the son of my brother again, he died of starvation and then after that my mother died, I didn't know where they buried her. After that my sister, oh my nephew, the one who came to live with me, he studied to become a doctor, he was dying, I didn't know that. And then my sister died, I knew what place they buried, but I not know where her body was because they put six or seven bodies in the same place. And then the baby of my sister died, and I didn't know where they buried. And after that, I think the last one was my sister-in-law and I don't know. So I think in all, I lost 16 of my family during the communist, so all together there was 19 including me. But during the Vietnamese takeover, I have only three left, myself, my son and my niece.

Q. So you don't know what happened to these people, in other words when they would die they would be taken away by the communist and you wouldn't know what happened?

A. No, these people would die by starvation and then they would be taken away by the communist and I don't have no idea where they buried them. I couldn't even take the time off to go because you don't know when they gonna take the body, I don't see them because it depends, if they available they will take it, if not they may come sometimes 2 days or 3 days.

Interview 4 - Part 6

- Q. How did you deal with it, at the time it was happening, did it happen so quickly that you didn't think of it at the time, how did the Cambodian people deal with a situation like that?
- A. Well I think during that situation, this is according to my experience, I think my mind was quite numb and during that time a lot of people lost their human being. As I told you in my story that a lot of people had been fighting and they distrust, so all in their mind they think how can they survive themselves. But for myself I think the way I deal with my family, I think when we was together, I work hard and I really do the best I could in order to take care and save my family. My sister-in-law and my brother of course I have a lot of thinking about them lately, but during that time it seemed if they die I feel like I relieved because it too much for me to watch them the way they were starving, they have no food to eat. And then also, my sister, I don't know how to help her and also she have a baby with she has to eat more than one person usually could eat. And my nephew, he worked hard and he had very little food and he couldn't survive anyway. Also, they split me and my family too, it is kind of very difficult and I have no chance to go and help my mom and she cannot come to visit me, it was too much. So when she was dying, I think it just relieved me and I think that she will have more peaceful way from being dead, instead if she was alive and she could watch me and then worry about me. Also my mother, as I told you in my story that I did do a lot of things so I feel like it is not my fault that she died, it was the communist who did it to her and I separate from that time and what I try to do I have to save the rest of my family, that is what is on my mind.
- Q. Now that a few years have gone by, what do you think about those deaths, are there any resolved issues, in the sense that all these people died, they weren't able to be buried in the Cambodian tradition?
- A. I do think a lot about it, but the possible way they I could do, I think if a Cambodian have a peaceful by traditional way that we are used to dealing with, you don't have to see the bones of your family and you invite the monk and the monk could do and your family would get it. But Cambodian believing that doesn't matter where your bone was, but the spirit always follow you. So if the Cambodian country ever peaceful, I will go back and I have a chance to invite a monk I will do the ceremony and I will say all my family name who die and I will ask the monk to read it. This thing you know my name, offer is gonna go so and so which is related to her, my mother name, my father name something like that, in Cambodian's still do here in the U.S. when they invite the monk to do the ceremony to remember their dead family.
- Q. But for a Cambodian, is that unresolved, it sounds to me that you can't really be at

peace with the situation until somehow you have dealt with a proper burial of your family?

A. Yes it not done when you think, if you think that your family died, you didn't know where they put, maybe you have no clothes, this and that, it bothered your mind a lot. But when it comes to my mind, I have to really think the other way that I can do, because if I feel like that and I'm gonna end up depressed, I say that what is the fact, the fact is during the communist I do the best I could to save my family and now they die, it is not my fault, so I have to declare that. And what I can do right now, if I gonna use them to present that I have to feel guilty, I have to be grieving a lot and beside that, I have the people that I have to take care of which my family who is alive, and I am sure that my family who died would want me to do that too. Because I remember my mom told me that; she old, if she dies she dies, but if I am alive she asked my to please take care of the rest of the family. I think if I'm really cruel to my family at the time, I think I lost control and I do bad things for them, it may cause a lot of problems. Also, if I done that to my family I think I have to do a lot of dealing with the traditional way, invite a monk to come and I would confess to the monk that I did this to my family, so I will bring all these things, I just want them to forgive me and then let me free so I could take care of the rest of our family.

Q. So if you had been devoted to your family, you would in some way have a lot more on your mind?

A. Yes. For instance I left Cambodia, I feel very guilty that I take off and my family is there suffering. And for 2 years I been depressed, I don't know, I recall that I must of been on medication, but the medication doesn't help me, I refuse to take it, because I feel very guilty to be here in the U.S., I have something better than I had during the *Pol Pot* and I can recall, I have a flashback, when I eat something good, I always see my family in front of me that they have nothing to eat, just like I was there before I came to the U.S.. But I have to switch my thoughts after one hour or half hour I have to control my thought not to go all day, and I have to think the positive way, I say; if I come here to this country, the good thing that I have done now, I can be the hope of my family, if I didn't come here then my family wouldn't get anything they have no home, so I have to work that way, switch my thoughts.

Q. In a way, your always in a trap, you can never really totally resolve it until you and your family or reunited?

A. No, right now originally I am a survivor, so I still put myself like that, I am not any better than the other people. I'm still a lot of time that will come on my mind that I feel very guilty. Right now if I go to the concert or something like that in order to make me feel better, it wouldn't, it gonna make me worse. So if I do something pack the medicine or send the money to my family, that will make me

feel better, that is a healthy sign.

Q. Does going to the concert make you feel worse, why?

A. Yes, now it is better but before it was different, I remember when I was in school, Mary and the other people asked me to join it because the whole school they went to listen and then they stand up, and they hold hands, and I didn't stand up, I was sitting right in my chair, I look to them, I thought it wasn't pleasure at all until one of the professor's came and held my hand and then I stood up and then my hand was shaking and my body was shaking and then he told me I have to go back to my room, I can't stay. But no I think I put the other positive way that I knew that I could not have pleasure for myself like I use to, but I have to be hopeful for the younger generation, because I cannot always show them the suffering all the time, otherwise they have no hope. So I be there for ceremony for the party for a short time and meet the people and then I left. I think the healthy side it's still in the process, like myself, I still a lot of something bothering my thoughts, but you gonna have to push yourself so hard to change your mind to think about the positive way and think what you can do now. Because before I use to blame myself a lot, and now I put the past away. It is still very hard for me but you know I am up and down, up and down, but if you think that you are not wanted here, you come from a very difficult time, so you've got to think that, I have to survive, I am a victim and why do I have to survive, because my family needs me. Because my obligation, my responsibilities to help Cambodian people the best I could. I know that for myself, only me I cannot help a lot but it is still my responsibility. I think that is what is keeping me alive.

Q. Do you think your mother would be proud of you and your father?

A. Well I think my family would be very proud because since I was in Cambodia my hand is never dirty since I came here, I work very very hard and now finally, I get to the point that I could create something for the young generation because I owe them that?

Q. What do you owe them?

A. Because my parents, the old generation before my generation they owe me by having to do something for my hope. And now that my turn that I owe them to give them hope and create something for them so they won't get mad, they will have something to remember, to be still loyal to their own country to still remember the Cambodia. Of course we have a bad part, but we have a good part too. Because when I came to this country, when I tried to find a document to study, it very difficult for me I do not understand too much about the Cambodian's because we have no document available, all I can remember the history while I was study in school in Cambodia. I think I owe the Cambodia people, young generation to understand the Cambodian history, why what happened, why the

Cambodian's have a lot of sickness, why they die a lot and they have a lot of depression. And they distrust to their own people, jealousy, plus, so I think as soon as they understand about it they could have a chance, a little bit easy to remember the Cambodia again. I think from my own experience that is all I could say, but if you would allow me to talk about general, I think some people would be a little bit different, but not too much.

Q. Your own situation is fine, not only did you lose your loved ones but you were placed in an awful situation in terms with dealing with that loss.

A. Yes you have no way to deal with it. And also your mind it's not sensible, like you get to use, it is very difficult.

Q. But in many ways the losses, that really stuck with you is not the personal or physical trauma that you experienced personally but the losses that you experience, the fact that you may of been tortured or you may have been starved, not any food, is less an issue than the fact that you lost your mother and relatives and you weren't able to bury them. It sounds like the physical pain that you experienced is not as terrible as the emotional.

A. Not too much, my physical pain, I still feel like I can handle that, but the loss of my family does, I can't recover. But it made a lot of people that they have no chance to be with their family, to help their family, then they die they don't know where they are and right now it is bothering their mind a lot, which I understand because it's sense of guilt, survival guilt it is mentally bothering you a great deal. You always came and flashback sometimes and you are working and soon as you have a 5 minute break, sometime your mind goes on and on, even though you don't want it. But a lot of people try to forget it, to deny it, they work hard, they get a new car, they have a good diamond, if they have very good looking in the public, they will feel better, but it doesn't, those things just I think from my understanding, just the way the people try to present that they are in good condition, but they aren't.

Q. Why aren't they?

A. Because they deny the truth, because the people still don't believe that the more you talk the more you express, the issue became more normal. Most of the Cambodian people, to express their own history their own end to the other people beside their own family, and if they kept it and kept it and gonna go toward their brain and then sooner or later they became really very sick and sometime they lose control and kill themselves. Because the Cambodian's are I think considered as close system and sometimes they would rather die with their own mystery, instead of sharing.

Q. When you say survive or guilt, is it guilt, I am not sure what you mean by that.

A. Survive or guilt, a lot of people, this is from my own experience. They didn't help their family too much they always think about themselves and they denied it through. In the camp their mind is still numb, they didn't think, they say that; if they ever come to the third country, my problems would all be resolved, but they came to the third country and then I think the reality and the guilt start to show up, they recall, doesn't matter you want or not, but it come to your mind. You already recall during the communist what you do, sometime it is just like a movie, they could go to minute from one minute, they remember the whole thing, sometime they can't even remember one thing. So when they remember, their mind is very upset, they don't know what to do, and they don't want to do it, still don't want to do it because they want to do it, of course I think they could use their time to do the insurance, by sending this and that to their family so they have a connection because the Cambodian people in terms of very point of view, I think if you disconnect from your family that doesn't matter your family bad or good, I think you became very insecure and you don't know that you are insecure but I think the mind is bothering you a lot. So that's why I think in Cambodia, I think this is our traditional way, our custom way to deal with for over 2,500 years ago, we still do that, even when we come here in the U.S., people die, you have to remember them, connect with them by making food, pray or talk to them. Well, my own experience, I do talk to my parent's spirit all the time, sometime I use the incense to talk with them, to tell them what I do, what I want to do for the rest of my family. I don't know how much help, but it kind of relieves myself, it seems like I know that I inform to my family, I know that they gonna play their part.

Q. A lot of people in a normal situation, have terrible relationships with their parents, in American community, Cambodian, there must be families where the children don't have good relationships with their parents, and then of course when their parents die, why would the guilt of losing your parent in the *Pol Pot* situation and you didn't have a good relationship with your parents, be a greater guilt than the death of a parent under normal conditions?

A. I think for my thinking, the people who have bad relationships with their parents, I think if they don't ask for help of course they still hate you, they say that; well my parents when I was growing up they take me, go to sell something and they took my money and pay for his own bill or they were drunk, they were never home and they was bad, they hit me all the time, this and that. But again, I think the royalty, is bothering you because doesn't matter how much problem you go through with your family but invisible royalty still connect in your mind. Because you have to deal with it, I think if I see the patient like that, I would suggest them to find out about their history of their family, straight out, why the people do that because in order to blame, well my father came home and he drink and he hit me, why do he drink, what happened? Have to have some story told in the family. Those people

I think have a lot of problems gonna bother their mind and they never became a self-confident themselves, they always feel insecure because they really don't know about their own rule. You really have to know very well about your own rule and to understand why, like that, you have to really study about it. So I think the way for Cambodia to heal, I think every Cambodian should be told their story, should not be ashamed at all. It is very hard, as you know these people are very distrust and they very weak and confused, they don't know what way is the right way, what way the healing way that they should do, that is why you see a lot of people buy a new car, a house, this and that, it looks good when they come and you say; hi, how are you, they say; oh I am very good, but when they get a problem they come to talk to you right away they was in tears, this problem and that problem, they never have what they had. Amazing that lately, a few Cambodians had told me that I was very rich, they don't know why, because they don't understand, how can I have time to help the people, and how can I have time to survive, and I never asked some money from the people, I never asked them for help, for instance, I get my hand operation, I go to the hospital, I stay in the hospital I get out, I didn't even tell the people, they say; how come you didn't tell, I say; what can you do if I am sick in the hospital, if anything they can do I would ask, but there is nothing they can do for me. This is not the way Cambodia deal with the Cambodian, when you sick they always go to ask this and that, if I was depressed that's another thing to deal with but operation, there is just no way the Cambodian's could help me. Just recently, a couple of days ago, one Cambodian man come to tell me, he say that; you know people keep saying that you are very rich, and then Mary would say that; well you know, she was teasing, she produced a story, she say that; well when she come, she get off from the country, she brought a lot of diamond, and then he say; so where are they now, well she's buried under the tree and when the men cut the tree, she lost the diamond, it was just a teasing part. I think next time, I am gonna say I am rich because my heart rich, my brain rich, if you want to learn how, I will teach them.

- Q. How would you summarize how you think the *Pol Pot* has damaged you, how it made your life more difficult, what do you think you have inherited from the *Pol Pot* experience that you are still dealing with?
- A. I think when I read a book about the Cambodian history, it seemed this problem, it just not because of *Pol Pot* too, it's a problem that's been brought up years ago and Cambodia always want full power to become a leader and want everything by their own rule not because they want anything go by law, the system. So if *Pol Pot* started, he is the best one, but if you look back you see a lot of Cambodian leader wasn't quite smart either they always do something that is damaging to the people, the very innocent. That is why his legacy go on and on through *Pol Pot* now, and as you may, as I read from the book in France, *Pol Pot* had talked about power that he dreamed, he wanted to become like a god or something, like the other leader of Cambodia.

Q. How is that historical experience that you experienced through *Pol Pot*, how is that affecting your life now?

A. Affecting life now, I think *Pol Pot*, he is a crazy man which I have something at what the people had done before through his mind too, it affected my life by splitting my family by caused a lot people mentally sick. And I think as soon as they put him on trial, I deserve to know why he done that, but from now on I cannot use him too much to have power over me, because otherwise I would go crazy and I couldn't do nothing in my life. Right now I think that I, one thing I have to believe that it is the life cycle and you never know what next, so that is why Cambodia, you thought it would never happen like that, but it goes zip like that. And after the Buddha say; you never know, you cannot tell the future, what it is gonna be, for instance myself, today I am better, tomorrow I am sick, so you never know. You gonna keep the past to have power over me, you cannot make plans for the future. I think, because the *Pol Pot* have been destroyed Cambodian, I think I really want to see him on trial, and then after that I fell like I could be free of something and make those issues in the story and the people would know about that. Because right now if you hate *Pol Pot* too much you don't know *Pol Pot* alone or somebody else, why do they do that, it's just a lot of questions in my mind right now. I really tell the truth that even though a lot of my family almost died, I was suffering a lot, but I really ???, put on my pin, spirit to help me to resolve this problem because myself alone I cannot handle this, it was too much for me.

Q. When you were in the concentration camps, how were you able to survive those experiences?

A. It was still amazing for me now, I don't know why during the communist, I can survive, if I read my story, it still amazes me. I have no idea, I talked to the other people they say they have no idea too how can they survive if they see these things. But I think that is amazing, I do believe that it is your life it doesn't matter how much you try to make your life better or you try to build your life, but there is still something beside that that goes together, either nature, either god, it's meant, and work with your decision. So I think that I am surviving because I meant to survive, I don't think how much am I smart, I can go through this tremendous experience.

Q. Where there techniques that you used, did you pray every night?

A. Yes I always use prayers every night, I always think I am gonna die, I call on my parents spirit, my mother, my father. Now I recall when I am alone when I get upset or something, I will go this morning I just talked to my parents spirit before I came to the office because I was dreaming that one of niece's died and became crazy and I told her that I would drive the car and she say no I will drive, I told her

no you can't drive because you are crazy, you gonna kill everybody, and until I woke up and the dream was bothering me so I talked with my parents spirit, I say that; I know that she is very close to my niece, would she please take care of her, and take care of our family in Cambodia, and I will be here working hard to be their hope. At least I would be talking with them so I feel that I share with them, I connect with them all the time.

Q. Did you have many experiences in Cambodia where you felt that you were going to die?

A. I always thought that I was gonna live, I don't know why. There was so many times that I was gonna get killed by the communist, but I never feel like I was gonna die, even though my hand was very sick and a lot of people thought I was gonna die, but I have no fear that I was gonna die, it never come to my mind. Instead of that I was thinking that this hand I don't know if I can drive or not, that is the thing that I recall.

Q. In the communist world was there any unusual feeling to being in that environment, for instances did you ever feel that the world you were living in is crazy or that you are losing your mind or your real world had been totally destroyed?

A. In those camps I feel that I was disconnect from the other world, it isolated, it's no freedom, nothing that I can do.

Q. What was the quality of the feeling, like a dream, what did it feel like to you, how would you describe it?

A. I was a very emotional in the concentration camp, once in awhile when I have a chance to go to take baths in the river, right near the sunset, I recall that I look into the sky and it doesn't change color, look at the moon and sun, it still the same, it was nothing changed, the trees still the same, but why I became to the different world, it seemed I've never been, I never dreamed that it could happen like this. It takes a very long time until I accept it, and then I say well this life, I cannot think anymore, this is all that I have, so I have to live it. And I remember that one time I was very sick and I was far away from my mother, I had a very high fever, I had malaria, I tried to recover, to feel that I was at home. I would close my eyes, I do not want to see all the world, from the leave of the tree and little house made from the bamboo and I tried to close my eyes to try to remember my place that I used to live in *Phnom Penh*.

Q. Would you say the world of the communist was a world of suffering, what was it like?

A. I think the world was strange and fear, disconnected.

Q. Did you feel any security for the fact that people had created this world, looked like you, talked like you, they were Khmer, they were Cambodians, did that help in anyway?

A. No not at all, I feel very strange with them, like they are not Cambodians, like they speak a different language, they don't understand, you cannot ask them.

Q. Did you ever have the feeling that for instance you were in a play and someone was moving around and making you do the things that you had absolutely no control of your life?

A. Yes I feel that way, I feel like I don't where my place, I don't know, I have no control over myself, I feel like I am a slave and waiting to hear what they order me to do. But one thing that I kept on my mind, this is after all my family died, I would take ??? of my life, do anything possible I could in order to save my two children.

Q. But being in a world where you have absolutely no control, how can one have a personality?

A. According to my experience, I didn't even try to recall who I am, I just live day by day.

Q. You lost your personality?

A. Yes I lost my personality, live day by day. I take care and you say well today you gonna get killed and tomorrow I am gonna send you there you prepare and go.

Q. Did you ever feel in yourself or the Cambodian people who are in this situation, were you able to have any hatred or anger, or say someday I will get revenge, or did it never come to your mind?

A. Usually before, when I come to this country the first time, when I hate the people, I just don't want to deal with them, I just have nothing to do with them, this is my personal life usually deal with the people. If they something that I don't like it, they was unfair, I just quit with them, not because I have to fight with them or because I have to do something for them, I just don't want to doing anything with them. And when I came to the country I think I, some people I get very mad and hate them I don't understand why they hurt me, this and that, and I would suffer a lot, I will cry, I will feel bad, but right now I deal different. I am not going to you Cambodian system anymore, I voted the American way because American way it was better for me, and some ways Cambodia better for me so I kind of mix, I just pick which one that would be useful for me, for instance, if I get mad at

somebody, I would tell them to come talk with me, I will talk with them, why they get mad with me, why would they hate me, if I was wrong I have to apologize, I have to say I'm sorry I did wrong, but if I am not wrong, I get to tell them in face, I say; you not do this right, if you do this time you have to deal with me, for this way and this way. I think that thing, not only because I worry from pain for myself, I feel like I teach the people to know what part they play is wrong, what part they play is right. Because in Cambodia way, you won't say, you would say; say like I hate you, I say I hate you I don't want to see you, oh Richard I like you a lot, but next time you say *Theam Vy* can I come to meet you, oh, I am so busy or I would love to meet you, see this is the most common Cambodia will deal with, most of Southeast Asian, you never know because if they don't want to be, they just say you know, but I'm saying sometime the truth was they was busy too, so it is not 100%.

- Q. I don't hear much about the Cambodians talking much about their anger towards the Khmer Rouge, why is that do you think?
- A. I think the Cambodians are still very sick, they cannot talk to the Khmer Rouge, hardly to see them, the blame, they all blame to their family, they always will blame someone else, that's not real. They should blame the politician who run the Cambodian country, but your not gonna hear them say oh, see *Pol Pot* is kind of ignoring, he should not do like that, if he cannot run the country, why let somebody. They not explain like the American, the system was different, if they would have an anxiety depression because they lost their family, or bothering their mind they would lose control and fight with their family and say; oh, well my wife she should of cooked for me, just little things they pick up from one another.
- Q. You see the anger affecting their relationship to their family, but it seems like the anger is coming from another place, they never seem to say much about their anger about Khmer Rouge the concentration camps, they maybe furious at their wife and never say anything about the fact that the Khmer Rouge had killed their entire family, why is that?
- A. The other hand I would think that perhaps the Cambodians were so disconnected to the government to the leader, it seemed if they do like that, whatever the leader do it, it was understanding, you don't have to get mad with them, they wouldn't or try to define why and what happened, they just say; forget it. It's not as hard to get the people to say that well we have to side in order to put *Pol Pot* on trial, not because we want to kill them but they owe us the truth. Because our family didn't do anything and they die like animals. If they side, they afraid that they just want to forget because they have too difficult experience, traumatized and they just think that they just want to deal any hard issue anymore, they just want to live day by day.

- Q. Well what do you think of that, forget the past, put it behind you, you don't like that idea, why not?
- A. No I don't think that is a healthy side at all. Well I think you have to face it because that is reality, you have to take responsibility to declare what the problem, why is it like that.
- Q. Why, it might make you more depressed, it might make you more sad, you may feel less power, and say gee what can I do about the situation?
- A. I think right now it is still very difficult for the Cambodian people to try to stand up and say like that, but I think in the future, maybe 5 years more, I hope, I think they gonna become strong and a lot of Cambodians educated and then by then a lot of people gonna write a book and I hope they will try to talk more and more about what happened.
- Q. Do you think women have a different way of coping with the communist situation, do you think women did better in the concentration camps?
- A. Well I am very interested in that point still, but because I didn't do any research, have a screening test done, I just don't want the men to say I was a joke, because I am a woman. But my local opinion, it seemed the women during the communist it seemed they survived better and during the camps, they can take three or four children and come to U.S.. It seemed they handled it better, also when they came to this country, I think, according to my experience, but it seemed the women, slow but constantly, still on what she supposed to do, she never give up.
- Q. Why do you think they do better than the men?
- A. I think, the women before they never, the majority of them all never think they gonna have to work, they gonna have to do something to take care of their family, they always think they get married, I am gonna stay home and take care of the children and my husband work, make the money or if they not get married they say if I'm gonna get married I don't have to worry about finances. When they came here the woman can go to work take responsibility of the family which they never expected to do before and a lot of women didn't think they could do that before and so sooner you know that you can do something, you can go to work, you can express, you can make money like the men. They feel more strength, more energy, more to find who they are, also I think some Cambodian women have a lot of compassion about the Cambodian women too, which I don't blame because they cannot be strong, not their fault but because the men brought up in Cambodia the men have a lot self responsible for taking care of the family and when they came here they lost their position, which was very difficult.

- Q. What about in the concentration camps why do you think the women might have done a little better than men?
- A. I think it seemed, physically the men always have more energy more than the women, in the concentration camp when it come to the full situation, the men have it difficult to survive, they became skinny, they just don't have too much thinking, I think the men always dream about ???, they would say that if I have this, I will ??? ??? for tomorrow, they will want something really a lot more than the woman. The always try for bigger things, they suffer more for giving so little.
- Q. Do you think the *Khmer Rouge* were more violent towards the men, did they direct more of their hostility and the killing at the men than the women?
- A. I don't have anything that I recall that the communist would treat in my part that the men were treated differently from the women.
- Q. So you think for the men the experience of the camps was a bigger blow to their thinking than for the women, the women were able to get by on much less than the men?
- A. The men it is easy, their mind is disconnected with their family or they very easy to disconnect it, for instance say like they are on a starvation process the men perhaps think that; boy this foods not gonna be enough for me, I am not gonna share with my family of somebody else. The women always very common for the women to share and split, in their mind it is always what is important, my children, my husband. I think the women have more, still not disconnected with the relationship like the men.
- Q. If they are more connected, does that mean they get more support from their family?
- A. I think the more they disconnect the more you want to survive, your mind have to think straight, prove yourself to get straight not to get crazy. The women were more realistic to what was going on than the men were.
- Q. We were talking about how it felt to be in the work camp. Did you have anymore idea's about that?
- A. No.
- Q. Many Cambodians report that they have frequent dreams or memories that are constantly coming to them, did you that experience? What kind of memories or dreams do you that you have are still important to you?

- A. Yes. The dream that I have, I have a lot of time, I dream always recall back during the time that I was in the communist regime. I saw the communist tie me or stop me from doing anything that I want, I have a lot of fear and I woke up and sometime I not realize that where I am, but I woke up right away and I start jumping and I thought I was in the concentration camp and a few minutes after I look and I say no I am in the U.S. and I start to calm down. The thing that bothers me, I just kept thinking and wishing that I had my children with me, I would dream that he is with me, and I ask him to come with me and he say no, I don't want to go with you or sometime I would dream that he was mad with me, or something like that, and that is when I get up and I am upset.
- Q. When do the dreams or nightmares begin, before the camp or after the camp, did you have a lot of dreams before the *Pol Pot* situation?
- A. The dream only concern maybe somebody in my family sake or maybe something not good for me, tomorrow, next month maybe the school, that I flunked the test, something like that. That is the most concern that I had because usually before the fall of the country, if I had a dream, I would tell my parents or my grandmother and she would interpret the dream, what happened something like that. But is nothing really a big deal that I would be of concerned at all, I woke up and I feel very afraid.
- Q. Did you have any dreams or nightmares while you were in the work camps?
- A. I had dreams but mostly as I recall, I had seen my great grandmother's spirit, which I never seen her anymore, I only seen her through the picture, and I dream about her she came. She was in the picture, she talked to me, she say that; if you just close your mouth up, not to say anything I would be safe.
- Q. She was warning you to protect yourself?
- A. Yes. During that time, I was in the forest for cutting wood, I had a dream that I saw the woman in the white dress come to tell me, that I should not say anything and I will be safe. Because in the forest I think they believe that if you say something for instance you gonna see the tiger and they say that pretty soon you are gonna see the tiger or you get lost because they believe in the forest they have the spirit of honest people taking care of the forest, so you have to be very respect and talk honest and you will be safe.
- Q. When did the nightmares begin or the dreams of remembering, it didn't happen in the refugee camps?
- A. In the U.S.. In the refugee camp, I am sure that I have one or two time, which I can't remember.

- Q. How often do you dream, every night, once a week, or month?
- A. Sometime two times a week, sometime one time a month, it is not really, it depends.
- Q. These dreams are the same, about your children?
- A. About my children, about the spirit of my mother and father. I dream about my mother very often and my family in Cambodia. The communist trying to hurt me, they do really cruel things to the other people that make me afraid.
- Q. Do you think that women when they are in the camps or the refugee camps that they have a big fear about protecting themselves sexually, from sexual violence, or do you think that really isn't on the mind of most women?
- A. Well I can say in general, but I have no idea how many women, majority. I think during the communist I believe that the women have a lot of fear because they are afraid if the men in love with them, or try to rape them, they both will get killed, so they have to be careful. The communist rule, you cannot be in love with one another, you cannot sleep together without getting married by their way so if you do that that means that you against their rules and you would be killed.
- Q. Were women afraid that men would, when their in the forest or the camps that men will hurt them sexually, is that a fear that women had?
- A. I can imagine that in the camps, I think a lot of parents have fear about their children, their young daughter, they afraid that she might get raped from the man, that is common because I have seen my patient and they had told me that the reason that their daughter getting married so young because they don't want to keep them too long because they are afraid that the men will rape her.
- Q. But you as a young woman didn't have a fear?
- A. Well I had fear onetime during the communist that the men he want to rape me, he was in love with me, but he couldn't do anything but I was scared, because sometime he would try to meet me in the very quiet place, and if somebody seen me I would be in trouble.
- Q. But most of the time you didn't think about it as a problem?
- A. When I was growing up in the village that was quite safe, my parents were very known and I never think that way.

- Q. What is sexual violence for instance if the man forces you to marry him is that rape?
- A. Yes.
- Q. I was wondering how much the Cambodian woman under the communist, experienced or afraid of other types of situations, for instance you were forced to marry me and have sex with me and you didn't love me, would the Cambodian woman consider that rape or she just think that is a common?
- A. I think the Cambodian woman would consider that rape.
- Q. So another words if you were forced to marry a man you didn't love and had to sleep with him, the woman would consider that rape?
- A. Yes. If you not married and you are forced to sleep with him.
- Q. Say you are forced to marry and then sleep with him?
- A. Well, I still hesitate to say rape or not because of course you go through the ceremony and then that mean that legally you can't say that the men rape you.
- Q. Legally, but on the other hand I understand the communist would force the women to marry men they didn't love?
- A. Yes I know that but that is gonna give the women a lot of suffering because if she doesn't like that man and she felt like that, she felt like the man had raped her but legally it is not, but mentally she would think like that.
- Q. In your dreams or your nightmares did you ever have the fear that men were chasing you or trying to rape you or taking advantage of you sexually or that you were going to be forced into a marriage?
- A. I do, when I came here yes I do. I do dream that the men try to get married to me and sometime I say well you have to ask my mother because I cannot decide. And another time I would dream that the men want to get married with me and I refused to them that no I would not get married and he would say; no you have to get married with me, kept forcing me and I told him; that isn't fair you want to get married with me, you love me but I don't love you, how can you be fair to me, something like that. Sometimes I will dream that I saw a really black man, really huge and he was trying to rape me and I was scared and have to run away sometime I feel like I run to this place and he never saw me and then he found me and I tried to escape to another place, something like that.

Q. It seemed to me that in the communist and refugee camps as well that, women are very vulnerable, that men will often take advantage of women, their rape them or force them to have sex or force them into marriage, it strikes me that in talking with Cambodian women this is like anything that has to do with sex or this kind of situation that they don't like talking about it very much, like this is maybe one of their biggest fears and at the same time it is one of the things they are willing to talk about the least, is that true?

A. Well it is not really common before the communist and also during the communist everybody would be very careful about doing that, they have to protect themselves, and also, when you are in that situation you just don't have energy to think about that, only the communist people who they have enough to eat, and they can think about that. When they say their people come from the city or something like that they would have an eye on it and the woman have to protect it.

Q. But the point I am making, is not really a serious issue, this issue we are discussing under the communist regime or is it an issue that because of something unique about it, Cambodian women don't like to talk about it very much, I can't tell if it was something that big of a deal, or whether it is something so intimate and so embarrassing, even though it may be a big problem for them the Cambodian women they never want to discuss it?

A. According to my experience I don't really before the communist regime I don't think it is a big issue on that, even though Cambodian women not talk, but I don't think really it is a big issue.

Q. What about during the communist regime or in the refugee camps?

A. During the refugee camps, they really careful because if they ever do that and anybody saw it, they will take the rest of their life.

Q. What about in the *Pol Pot* situation, it wasn't a problem?

A. Well it was a problem because, well it's not a really big problem, talking about majority, I don't think it fit in that category, but they have few problems that people will, they can't control and they will talk to one another and the communist will take them and kill them. I think as far as I understand the big problem when they was in the camp and escape from Cambodia to the camp, that I think was a very big problem.

Q. Why during the escape?

A. Well during the escape the people who escaped sometime the Thai, the Cambodians they will rape and they will kill them, or sometime after they rape

they will let them go and then in the camp the Thai military if they caught you someplace real quiet they will take a chance to do that, I had fear too when I was in the camp. I think right now, the great issue became really idea of great concern, because now they rape Cambodians directly more than anybody else. I remember that one of the Cambodians, she told me that she has been raped only one time and she had 1 child with her, now she is here and she say that she did not love him at all, she told him that; she cannot marry with him, but again at night, he was a gentleman and he sleep with her onetime. I think she is still upset, to bring up and say once in a while.

Q. Are there memories, good or bad or both that serve your friends that come back constantly, are there certain memories that come to your mind a lot?

A. My own memory, I was still, I have a good memory about my family, my friend from school and my teacher, I always bring those memories, even now I still talk with Mary about that once in a while. I think that the bad memory that I had is just during the time that my big sister died and my father loss a lot of houses and during the communist I lost my young sister, that is still very upsetting for me. Well I can't think right now. I recall about my life before the difficult time and the good times, the difficult time when I was married I now that my husband went out of town very often. Especially from 1972, 1973 and 1974 it was very difficult because I was in fear about him all the time.

Q. Do you think that most of your memories that you have now are mostly good memories of the past or bad or both?

A. Well I think some of the time I have good memories. Maybe because I deal with the truth, face the reality all the time and I work with the Cambodians and I get more understanding about life and reality. And I think if I already recall about the bad memories, I have more than a good memory, I would fail, I couldn't work. But I think most of the time, say like somebody will talk to me that, say like they blame me, they don't know where my family, they don't where I come from, I say that; I don't expect people to know who I am, I have to know who I am, the family that I come from, how much my family love me and how much they want me to be and how I can help them. I always think that way and I feel very strong.

Q. Do you ever look back at good memories of your marriage for instance, I know you were only married for a brief time?

A. Well I have a good memory about my husband, he was very respect to my mother and my father and family and they make the other side beside the problem that I had with him he really make my parents happy. If he did not treat my family good I will have a really bad memory the rest of my life, but I think he played a part that I really have appreciated.

- Q. What about image's, pictures in your mind, do you have pictures that come back that you see in your mind?
- A. The picture come back especially if I go to the wedding, say I saw a lot of people, they try to look good, they dress really expensive dress and they keep changing. The same people I go all the time, I went to the wedding and I saw them and they change from time to time and they try to deny the reality and when I am eating, I look to them and my mind flash back to the Cambodia during starvation.
- Q. You see pictures of people starving, what do these people look like?
- A. The people who danced in front of me, I didn't even see them, I don't what they do, but my mind kind of just blank, I see something that during the starvation the people really have nothing to eat.
- Q. The people that are starving, what did they look like?
- A. Just the same as I seen them during the communist. Very thin, and their faces look sad and ask for help. And then sometime it makes me a little bit upset, why these people they forget, why do they do something like this, overwhelm, can they think about the people in the camp, I just question everything like that.
- Q. So you would be at a party and you would see people starving and asking for help?
- A. Starving and the people in the camp.
- Q. Do you have other pictures that you see?
- A. That is all.
- Q. What about the spirit of ghost's, have you had any spirit come and talk to you or see any ghost, do you physically see the spirit or experience the spirit, explain what you meant when you talked about the spirit?
- A. Basically, I never see the spirit, but this what I was brought up with.PG
- Q. Some Cambodian people do actually communicate with spirits, but you never had that experience?
- A. The way they do like that, you have to have one person sometime a man or woman that can enter the spirit to talk to which I had that experience too when I was in Cambodia. Before the communist.

Q. What happened?

A. When my sister died and we missed her a lot, my mom she go to ask the woman who she make a living in that, they call the spirit into her body so they can talk. We asked my sister spirit, we call her name and when she get in she talked, but I think that part, we believe like 60% or 70% we neighbor's believe that this is 100% true, some question we tried to ask some question that only the spirit would know about that, nobody know about that, some question it amazes you that they can answer. The other time my cousin, we have a spirit of the crew that take care of my whole family so the spirit of the crew get into stay in my cousin body all the time. So when somebody in our family sick or anybody have a problem, the spirit would start to talk, say something to let us know. We could communicate by that, but the other communication that I would use now I would burn insense or candle and I will call my parents and talk to them, tell them what I want and I need them to help me. For instance I would say; please help me to do the right way the correct way.

Q. When you talk about your parents spirit, do you feel you are really in touch with the spirit of your family or do you feel this is a sort of form of prayer, meditation?

A. I feel like I really talk to them, I feel they hear me, I am relieved after I talk to them.

Q. Are there are any songs or music that go through your mind a lot?

A. The music that I still remember now is the Cambodia song, that was when I was young. Sometime it is like your favorite song.

Q. You could sing this song, could you tell us some of the words to this song?

A. I could say about the *Battambang* province. They would say, it seemed the person who write that song, he was kind of think that he was in love with some girl from *Battambang* province and they admired and admired. By the end of the song they separate. I think the one thing that I react is because it's *Battambang* it was in my province, so anything that they admire, I kind of feel like it was important.

Q. What is the name of the song in Cambodia?

A. *Battambang* is my heart.

Q. What does all this mean to you the dreams, nightmares, the visions the ghost and song, all these memories, what does it all mean to you?

- A. I think the thing that you see in the past and have a souvenir in the past always in your mind, it just mellow.
- Q. Souvenir of the past, why do you say souvenir?
- A. Souvenir, which is ??? of good things.
- Q. Do you think people who have gone through the experiences you have gone through have more active dream life, memory life than people who might have just a normal life, say you had a totally normal life in Cambodia, you grow up and get married and have children, do you think you have an active dream life, and have these rich memories that you have right now?
- A. I don't think so.
- Q. Why is that?
- A. Well I think because when you have a normal life, I think your mind just copy something, it's like nothing different, but when you have a difficult experience your mind copies deeply in your mind so it just matter of time to return in your memory better.
- Q. Why does the mind go over and over this, what is the purpose?
- A. The purpose, I think your mind is just like a copy machine, doesn't matter that you want to remember or not, always come back.
- Q. And the mind has copied these thick experiences?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Would you say in away that the printing of these experiences on your mind serve a form of history?
- A. Yes that is true. I believe that, it makes sense to me.
- Q. How would you see yourself as a vessel of history?
- A. The reason that I say, it's the mind, just like a copy, the souvenir, everything that you have in the past. Because of my own experience I really truly believe that because once in awhile all the memories that I had in the past always come back to me.
- Q. Do you think that this printing on your mind is just is truly a personal experience

or do you think it's part of a bigger thing? Do you think it is just your experience or do you think that what has been printed on your mind is an experience of a country of a historical period of a generation of men and women? If we read your mind are we just reading the life of *Theam Vy* or are we also reading the life of the people the history of the *Pol Pot* situation?

A. I think that is a reality.

Q. Can we learn from your reality, about the bigger picture?

A. I think you could, if you want to learn, I don't know how much you can absorb because when you experiencing it is different when you are learning.

Q. Can we learn from you, are these interviews just the story of *Theam Vy*, your own private story or can we learn something about Cambodia through this story?

A. You could learn something about Cambodia through my history. You listen to my history, I represent Cambodia, so a lot of part are very similar to the Cambodian people. So if you learn from my story you could understand better about Cambodia.

Q. So a lot in your story is similar to other Cambodians and some of it is uniquely you? What part of your story do you think is just you?

A. Well, I think some of my own story, I think about my family the way I dealt with it, and my experiences and the other thing that is very similar to the other Cambodians you could imagine my own story is different but not too much different. I think the uniqueness of my own experience, it's just a matter, my family I come from and the way I deal with it. Because if some family if they come from the city or they come from the mountains on the very countryside they would have their own unique behavior and unique to cope with their experiences.

Q. So in a way your memories, your own souvenir's of the past and also part of the history of your people, do you think that is good for a person to know that, do you think a lot of Cambodian's know that that these memories of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, not just about themselves but also their like a bank, a storage place for the history of their people?

A. Well they still cannot define the pain and they still keep thinking that their problem is only them, somebody else, no they the one very vulnerable and them the one who should be very ashamed that verbally they cannot share to the other people.

Q. Do you have anything else you want to say about your memories or dreams?

A. Well I have a memory about my nephew in Canada when he was very young. He was around 19, but he even kept giving everybody trouble because he will stay out late, 9:00 o'clock or 10, everybody would fall asleep, he knock at the door so we can let him, so we kind of get mad at him, but he is very bright. I think a couple of years later the dog bite him, and I don't know if he had any injection or not, but a few days later he was really hyperactive, he would make so much noise, I told him to stop it, stop it, he didn't stop it. I spanked him real hard and the next day he was sick he a convulsion, he was in a coma, I felt very guilty, I thought that maybe it was because I spanked him, but I don't think it was me, it was because of his sickness. And we took him to the hospital and the fortune teller say; tonight 12:00 if he not open his eyes he is not gonna live, but 12:00 it was just like a miracle, he opened his eyes and he called my mom because he was hungry. And another time I was very sick, that was the most time when I came here I miss my family a lot when I was very sick, my whole family did rotation, sit with me and I remember my mother she was very worried about me, she have her ??? and she sit next to me and she didn't say anything, she just look to me and she keep eating and eating ???, I think she very nervous. And everybody in my family gave me a lot of attention and all the time that I didn't feel good here, I missed my family the most. I don't understand sometime, like I live with Mary, I ask her too, sometimes somebody in her family say, for instance, her nephew or niece or somebody in her family die which is very close, and they very close and they can laugh. I just ask her; how can everybody laugh because this person died, she explained to me; well, you know here it is different everybody mind their own business when they have problem, even if you are close you cannot ask them, they keep separated. But it was not like I was brought up, if somebody, my cousin or my second or third cousin have a problem we all get involved and want to know what the problem is. And one day when I was sick and in my hometown very quiet, if my niece or nephew laughing silly, my sister would say you aren't sick you shouldn't laugh so everybody kind of give the whole attention to me.

Q. Which you liked?

A. Yes I liked it a lot.

Q. Do you miss all that attention from your family?

A. Yes I miss it a lot.

Q. You don't have a lot of family here in Hartford?

A. No, not a lot, I have only Mary that's all.

Q. When you left to go to Thailand you left behind your sister's son and your niece

and this was the older sister who had died, so when you went to Thailand and weren't able to go back, I guess you never seen them again, is that right, that must of been quite a shock for you to go to get food for your family and you couldn't go back, do you think a lot about this?

A. It is always on my mind. When I get my citizenship I told Immigration that; it was my son that I adopt, I think the Immigration helped me a lot.

Q. Do you think your family will send your son here?

A. Oh yes, I think years ago I received two letters for both of them.

Q. And your niece, you'll bring her here too?

A. Oh yes, because after all she is my daughter now.

Q. So you are waiting now to bring these 2 children, how old are they now?

A. Yes. I get so nervous, I think is around 14 now and my niece she is 17 or 18 already.

Q. And what are you nervous about?

A. I think if they are under 16, I have more power to get them, but if they over 18, it is kind of difficult.

Q. And you think the communist would let them leave Cambodia?

A. I don't think so and right now I don't want to write anything to be, to inform them how concerned I am, I love them because it was impossible because I would be afraid they would check the letter and get them in trouble.

Q. So what is your plan to get them to come here?

A. Well my plan, I am waiting for the U.S. Government they have a early departure that I could sponsor them, I could take them, but for now I can't even think about it.

Interview 4 - Part 7

Q. Were the communist Cambodians?

A. Yes, they look Cambodian, they were born in Cambodia and they speak Cambodian.

Q. Did the communist maintain any of the traditional values of Cambodian society, how were they Cambodian and in what way?

A. I think the way they look, they are Cambodian, but the way they think are different. Their concept, the way they believe, the way they develop the system. Because the Cambodian people they will have religion and they are very respectful to the old people and they very supportive about the culture that they always use it back years ago. And the communist even though they look Cambodian but the way they think is different. They think that the culture is not important they think that the whole system the whole culture and the religion is just nonsense and they would think that should not have a religion. The people are getting married should not waste a lot of time, a lot of money they should just go one time, 5 or 6 or 10 couples and than you done.

Q. Say that the *Pol Pot* or Khmer Rouge succeeded in killing all of the new people who did support the communist society, what would the perfect communist society look like? Say 20 years went by and all the new people who couldn't be adapted to the communist system die in war camps, what do you think the new communist society would look like?

A. According to my experience, I don't think the communist really have a plan about themselves about what their future will be. And I don't think the plan come from them either. Because after they kill the new people and the old people start to get fear, some of them they talk to us and say they kill the new people and pretty soon they are going to kill the old people too. So if you listen to that point you think that; who are going to have left, only a few left.

Q. But what does that society look like, this is the thing that I was never able to understand, in the communist society would the people be working like animals day and night, would they have no food. What would have been so wonderful about a totally communist Cambodian society? What did the communist themselves think that was going to be so wonderful about this new society?

A. Well I think the way they think if the new people die, which the new people are the one who really the people been evicted to comfortable place, have a lot of money, always have an easy life so they cannot change their mind or they cannot tell them what to do because they are intelligent some of the people. And if these

people die, they have no trouble to deal with the old people because they have been leading the old people a long time.

Q. What was the society of the old people look like?

A. I think the old society still look like, a few communist leaders are still going to treat the old people just like the new people they are not going to have too much change.

Q. The society for the old people would have continued to be a concentration camp?

A. Always

Q. The communist were not Cambodian because there was nothing in the communists' vision of society that had any traditional elements left?

A. They now represent Cambodia, they was completely different.

Q. As a Cambodian woman have you ever seen any of this before, was it a totally new idea to the Cambodians?

A. Well for my life it was a new idea that I never heard or seen before. And also I remember during the difficult time in the concentration camp, my mom had told me that this the first time that she ever know of.

Q. How can Cambodians totally create a new society that is totally non-Cambodian, this is a paradise? How can the Cambodians invent a new society that is totally non-Cambodian?

A. Well, if you are looking to what you hear from the communist, I think a lot of part come from jealousy, and they want to have freedom, because the communist leader betray the poor people very well. They told them that these people are never nice to you, they have more money than you, they have and easy life, you in the country you work so hard you have nothing left, now it is your turn. He will put them to work hard and you turn to have an easy life. And I think because the people from the countryside, they never go any far from the rice field to home and they just have no idea. And when the communist start to tell them that, their minds start to think that; that is the truth. And also, the legacy of Cambodia as you know who ever lead the leader the Cambodians won't stand p and speak they will say wherever you lead, I will follow you.

Q. For the communist for the new society, you don't have a sense of the Cambodian leaders creating a society in which people are happy, in other words was this ever the goal of the communists, did they ever say the purpose of this new society is to make everyone equal and to make everyone happy?

A. Well, that is what we understood before, they say the purpose of the communist

because they want to change an old society to a new society so the people could live equal could have the same but it was not turned like that. A lot of people they have a sense of guilt because they would get involved with the communist because the communist told them we want to do this, so the people live the same there is no slave, no rich, no poor. But as soon as they got involved with the communist they realize that it is not a goal that they told them, it was different and they can't change.

Q. Do you remember any of the *Pol Pot* songs or sayings? Where they're any sayings that they said over and over again?

A. Yes they do. I cannot think right now.

Q. Many Cambodian's remember things their mother and father said to them, traditional sayings or favorite songs, where they're any family sayings that you remember?

A. Well they never tell me, they never sing, but if they tell me what to say, they say to pray.

Q. Did your grandmother or relatives try to teach you by saying this is, that you remember now that is an important message:

A. I think the important one that my parents say to me is they say that: the way the look at me, you never ever doubt that we love you, my dad always told me that if you study hard anything in the whole world that you want, I could do what I want, and I would rather have only one pen as long as you do good in school.

Q. Were there any favorite stories, was your family big on telling stories?

A. Well they tell me a few stories about my great grandfather. Usually we have an old man in the neighborhood and he usually come to the visit for my father and we love him very much, we call him grandpa. He came and he always told us about folk stories, and we never wanted him to go back home just asked him to stay.

Q. Do you have any pictures and photograph's of your family?

A. No. But I am going to write and ask them to send some to me, because I want the picture of my mother and my father.

Q. Did you think the communist were Cambodian, did they maintain any traditional values. Do you want to say anything else about that?

A. I think the communist they are basically Cambodian, since the communist philosophy flew into their mind, it seemed they have a brainwash and their whole thought, behavior was different from Cambodia.

- Q. What did you see in the Khmer Rouge that was Cambodian?
- A. Well the Khmer Rouge was Cambodian because they speak Cambodian and they were born in Cambodia and everybody know that they were Cambodian.
- Q. But what values did they hold or what cultural attitudes did they have that would make them Cambodian?
- A. When you are talking about Khmer Rouge, not 100% of the people became Khmer Rouge. They were crazy about the new system, the new culture, the new organization, some of them, they really have a lot of loyalty and they want to be back to the Cambodian culture before. What I say, they're still afraid. They are not quite sure what is going to be next so they don't feel safe because they are comrade. They feel insecure. They would love to have freedom.
- Q. So you could see in them the feeling of security the striving for freedom that you felt in yourself as well?
- A. Yes. They want to be with their family. A lot of things are familiar to me, but I think the point that has changed or make themselves to look though, to look serious and say something cruel, because they have to say that in order to survive too.
- Q. So they were fighting for survival as well?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you remember any of the sayings or songs we spoke of before?
- A. I could not remember, but if you would like to have some communist song, I could collect it, but for my own remember, I could not because I don't think a lot during the communist, I don't even pay attention, that is not my interest, only my son would sing, but I would not pay attention.
- Q. What about family sayings or songs, did you remember any?
- A. From my own family background, the old people, they always say about songs from religion the Buddha or the poem.
- Q. I mean in terms of your life, any traditional sayings or songs or things your family said to you, reminders that you remember?
- A. I recall my family always say over and over that; whenever your everywhere the people could define who you are by the way you talk, the you behave, so you have to behave like you come from a good family, you don't have to have family that they know who you are but as soon as they know the way you behave or talk they could tell what family you come from so you have to hold that. With your family

your brothers and sisters or friends you have to know how to give and take, just can't be unfair. My parents always assure me that and my sisters and brothers, nobody loves like your parents. I remember one time that we cooked the food and we bring to the monks, but before that my father always says that; you got to think about your god who alive and I don't know who my god who is alive, I never understand it all. When I make the food we would take it to the monks and the monks always ask me are you taking care of your home. God, I say what is your home God, he says it is your parents. You have to give, serve them first before you give to the God in the pagoda. When I recall that, I think my parents are my first Gods. I have to take care of them.

Q. Now that you remember these sayings, what do you think, how do you feel about them now as you said "my parents are my first Gods" what meaning do these things have in your life?

A. Well the other thing also in the book that I went to school, we read the poem that there is nothing that you pay off what you put into you, even though the gold as big as the mountain, you can never pay them off. When I think about it, I think the parents it is very important, it is the god, the way I think, and I am very glad myself that I've been taking care of him as long as I could. My father when I was very young, mine years old, I would go to the market, believe it or not, he would wake me up 4 o'clock, because we live in the countryside, go to buy the coffee for him every morning until I think 12 or 13 and when he is sick I do take good care of him. And also, my mom, I took good care of her till she passed away and for that purpose now it's living a lot of strength of course I have a guilt the way I behave during the communist but it not very much that I have to suffer with the guilt that I had to my mother. I have to define that during that time it is very difficult and sometime I lost the trust of human being and became a little bit unfair to her. But again, I made up when she was dying, I would knee down to apologize to her, all the things that I had done without intention.

Q. What are you doing now to honor your parents?

A. For me to honor my family name, I have to be very strong and I want to get more education, my father wanted me to, and I like to help the people as much as I could, so that way I think my parents would be very proud of me. Because my parents wouldn't like me to do anything unfair, cheating people.

Q. So you think they would be very proud of the work you are doing now?

A. Yes. And I also, beyond that, I split everything that I make and send to my family, my sister, my children, and just a couple of weeks ago I had a dream about my distant grandmother, I haven't seen her for a long time. And it just bothering my mind when I was driving, I recall all this time, I recall that how they being helpful to my family when somebody sick or I was sick, they took care of my family and I

decide to make a check and send out to them so that they will feel better.

Q. You sent a check to Cambodia?

A. Yes, I sent to Cambodia, sent by my uncle and friend because he has a connection so he can send to those people in Cambodia:

Q. Did you send all of it or just some of it?

A. Some of it. To tell you the truth, I kept just for survival here enough for me to survive. That's why I tried to get a car, I can't even split but if I would send my money to Cambodia even though I cannot even claim the tax, but I feel happy because when I go to sleep or when I do something, there is not a lot of guilt bothering my mind. Or if something happened to Cambodia I will feel that I do the best. In the future I will have a lot of money by do something right, I think I will survive without a lot of guilt.

Q. What about yourself, if you just make enough to survive then how do you take care of yourself?

A. I have my nephew in France and one in Canada and now I try to support both of them too. I try to have a strong connection close to them more. Because the one in France he was separated several years ago and he is kind of far back from me even though he has a wife, he has a French wife. So far it worked very well, I keep calling, I keep sending some present to his wife I get feedback a little. He was a professor, teaching in a university in France, and I will try sometime to go to France and talk with him. But before I go to talk to him I have to build the relationship between her real close and me so I could have power to talk to him. Say that: look you know I do the best now you got to share some part to help our family. And also, my nephew in Canada, I spent some money for his wedding and as soon as he is established I want him to help the family so that way I will back up a little bit and think about my own life. Well the reason that I want to work hard on this issue because I hop in the future if Cambodia ever reopened I will apply and I thing I will have a chance to go faster than anybody else. To return, say like Cambodia will be open for a tourist, and then I could go because I am not involved with politics or religion all my work is based on health and mental health. And for this purpose, I can be useful for Cambodian people.

Q. So you would go back to live in Cambodia?

A. No not to live there but I want to go to devil up something is helping people and then come back to the states.

Q. So you would like to bring your skills as a psychologist or social worker back to Cambodia?

Interview 4 - Part 8

Q. How would you describe your new life in America?

A. I have been here six years in July. Did we talk about the cam yet?

Q. Do you want to say something about the cam first?

A. I think August because when I came back from the communist regime part, reunite with my family, I realized that the frustration was very difficult so I had to take a chance to drive back to Cambodia to Thailand to get more food for my family. And during that time I didn't tell my father at all, I just sneak out and right away from Cambodia to the Thai border it is very dangerous you could see a lot of mines under the ground and a lot of people get killed and you could smell alongside of you the body. Finally, I think one day, one night I would arrive in the border camp where you call *Norng Somith*, and while walking I do not realize that my feet bleeding or hurt, but I was all right but in the border I realized that all my feet were swollen and three or four days later all my toenails were off and I went to see the place that they have medicine and they give me an injection I think penicillin at that time, it was cured by then. When I moved to, when the situation get very difficult I am afraid to go back to Cambodia, I received a letter from my sister, she wrote to me which she didn't blame me at all, she told me that she missed me a lot. And then the Red Cross had come to *khao I Dang*, which I think November 22, I believe and during that time they have a hospital built up in *Khao I Dang* camp. And a lot of people sick, malaria, injured they brought to the hospital. Myself I worked with German hospital, and during that time I became a surgical nurse, we have a 170 beds and that included the leprosy too. I was trained when my grandmother was sick to be a nurse too. So when I came to the camp, I just needed a short time of training and I became a real nurse to a German doctor, he was very trustful to me, I would take care of thirty patients every day, give them injection, intravenous for 4 or 6 hours at one time. Life is very numb during that time, I never feel worried or upset, once in awhile I received a letter from my family, I feel very sad but again I think because the distance from Thailand to Cambodia is not too far so I feel like I am very close to them. The German people are very good team to work with and they really care about the refugee and I worked very hard over there. And I have been thinking that I want to go back to Cambodia, it seemed like I live in the new world and my mind haven't think a lot because I think because I was very busy with my work too. Later, I been called over to the *Khao I Dang* camp and I became a health worker at *Khao I Dang* health clinic over there. I worked conjunction with the supplementary feeding and the doctor and I would do assessment which is under five years if they underweight or they have vitamin deficiency I would send to the doctor or refer to supplementary feeding. And then

I was in ???, it was a very dramatic camp because a lot of people are being rejected from the immigration and also the immigration it was kind of most of them are very cruel they treat the refugees so low, if they want them to go they would say OK also myself I have been going through a grieving a lot with immigration too they would lose my file and it was just too much. I've been there in ??? camp for six or seven months and then I passed the test, so they sent me to Gallant, Indonesia and during that time, I didn't fly at all, I think we have around 500 people to go by ship. So it was 5 nights by the time that we arrived in Indonesia, and I worked there also with ICM help them to translate and give the medication to the people, the refugee and after four months there they sent me to the U.S.. When I get in the plane I have no feeling or thinking that where I am, where I'm gonna go, I have no idea, it seemed like I am in a dream. Before the plane get off to San Francisco they would announce that very soon you gonna take off and locate in San Francisco, all of a sudden I had a lot of emotions because I feel like I would never come back to my country anymore. And again, I feel like I want to fly back to the camp. When I was in the U.S. I stayed in Chicago for 2 weeks and then I went to California to spend the time with my sister-in-law and my cousins over there. And those people they didn't want me to move to the other state which I know Mary Scully in the camp we was very good friends and I know I like her work very much. And I thought that when I came to the U.S. I would like to continue to have education again and I think Mary the only person that could help me to get into the school, so I was pretty discouraged with the way the people behaved the way the people always about business, this and that, in Long Beach. So I thought I cannot do it because I am not the person who looking for business to make profit. And I called Mary, I told her I want to come here to Connecticut and she say she have no hesitation at all she say you could come but you have to pay your own trip. And I would just kind of get hurt a little bit because I never think that this is the culture, because that is the way the people here do all the time but I don't understand. I thought that why she so afraid that I am gonna ask her for money to pay my trip out here. My sister-in-law get me a plane ticket here, so I arrived here in August, 1981. When I was here, Mary wouldn't let me take any welfare or money from the government at all she told me you should not take any welfare because if you take this money they can stop another refugee in the camp to come here to the U.S., so if you don't take it that means there will be money available for another refugee, so I decided not to take it and Mary was supporting me the whole time. Again, I was helping the Cambodian's a lot which free, if somebody was sick or they need a translator I would go away with them and translate for them without getting any money. And after that I got a call from Lutheran Services they were an agency who brought the refugee too, they asked me to work there as a social worker.

Again, I had a very tough time to deal between the sponsor and the Cambodian people. Most of the time I get caught in the middle and I was very frustrated, I would come home and bring all the problems that I absorbed from what the Cambodians tell me and the problem that a sponsor want me to do. And I sit and

cry, I just don't know how to make a decision. And finally, I would talk to Mary, I would say I can't do it, so Mary and I decided to we have to go back to school in order to learn how to help the Cambodian people. And be a lot of money from the bank, and we both went to school and I was very lucky I had Dr. Abanash who he was an refugee himself from Hungary, he taught me a lot and we learned from ??? ?? and I always stayed very often to attend workshop, conference about cross-culture, about traditional healer, something like that. And for those things it made me become more helpful to the people, understand and confidence about how to deal with the Cambodian's, how to help them, how to talk to them. And then we have two American nurses who went to the camp and she came back which she have one thousand dollars left in the budget and we sit down and talk together and tried to ???, but I still very frustrated because I'm very angered about the American system and the way they deal with subject different person. But I was lucky to have all the support from the nurse, from Mary and from the other people, like a sponsor. And finally, ??? of the ???, beginning with a thousand dollars and during that time, I get pay very little, like 5 dollars an hour, like Avon. Also, I was teaching part-time in Hartford High School, which I get pay like 9 bucks an hour, and very often I would use this money for ???, because we really want to grow the ??? so bad because we know in the long run the Cambodians are gonna need this. I've been in a lot of depression myself too, when I first came, I think maybe one or two years after I came to the states I was very upset, I don't what to do, I don't know how to contact with my family, I don't know how I am gonna have money, I don't know how to drive or get a car, all these things kind of bothering my mind a lot. But I always try to think that what can I do if I stay and keep letting myself go into that state all the time I cannot help myself, I am gonna become sick and my family needs me. And like I mention to you all the time, but ever I have problems, or I discourage with things, never go right, or I am down in the dumps, something like that, I always bring the picture of my family and I became strong.

Q. The picture in your mind, who was in the picture?

A. Yes, in my mind, I think mostly my son. My son was in the picture, I think he needs me because I have a lot of promise with him. I promise I would make home for him, I will bring him to live with me. So for that whole thing it encouraged me to keep go. And again, I think my parents was right, I think I built my name for five years here, I think a lot of people who know me they very well known that I am a very trustful person which I am glad about that. I am very glad that I have a chance to get my degree because before I never think that it was too important because I think because I'm still very frustrated I don't know how I am gonna have money to go to school because I not get to use to borrow money from somebody and pay back, a lot of things I have to deal, and it is very difficult for me. But now I think I pay off the money that I lent from the bank. In the future, I think if I would have a chance to get my Ph.D, I just want to make myself well known in

the public so I will have a chance to present all to talk in order to help the Cambodian people for instance if I was well known in the public I could go to Washington to talk to the Congressman, say look these people really need help and I would like you to make any effort to help them because of this and this and this, I want to like that. And I don't want to forget even though I am a citizen in the future but I don't want to deny myself that I am not a refugee, I always want my feeling and my reality in my mind that I'm a refugee. I am very difficult to come to U.S. and how do I deal with all the situation after the big loss. Doesn't matter how high I am, doesn't matter how educated I am, doesn't matter how good I am but I just want to tell I am a refugee.

Q. What does that mean when you say I am a refugee?

A. The reason I want to think about that because that is what makes me healthy, make feel good. Why it makes me feel good, because the truth is I am the refugee, I don't want to go somewhere, some people may want to deny the truth, where they come from, they don't want to speak Cambodia, they don't want to deal with Cambodia, they just don't want any part. But for myself, I don't want to forget that, everywhere I want the people to know I am a Cambodia survivor and a refugee.

Q. You think unless you say that they won't know, are you afraid people are not going to know you are a Cambodian survivor?

A. Well mostly the reason I want them to think that, this is the in terms of dealing with Cambodian. I always present that I'm a refugee, I don't want to tell them, no, I don't want to talk about the refugee. Because when I work with a family, very often they always come too hard, life is so and say you know U.S. is too hard, life is so miserable, I just want to go back to my country, before I was military, I was leader, I had power, I was a teacher, I was this and that, and now you are a slave in the U.S.. And that is not true, when you think about the reality you should not compare what you get before, my country corrupts, we all eat dirt in order to survive, so we can't compare to what we had before. If I compared to what I had before, I'm gonna think, I have to compare to what I had during the communist to know.

Q. You had both in Cambodia, to remind the people that wasn't paradise?

A. Even though before it is not, some people it is not paradise either, good they and had bad, you are trying both, that Cambodia

Q. But some people try to remember it as paradise?

A: Yes. Because I think the thing that they want to remember is because they want to ease their mind. Just like during the time that I was very sick during the communist, I don't want to think that I was in the communist, I just want to close

my eyes think, where are the plates, where is the kitchen, where is my living room, I want to close and deny it. And that even hurt you more when you opened your eyes.

Q. You are also an American woman, person, you are also many other, being a Cambodian survivor, but emphasis on that though?

A. I always think that I'm not the one, I'm not the hill, up above everybody, I know that somebody know a lot things better than me. And again, my situation, I'm gonna take a lot of compliments, I'm gonna become American and I have to be, I am going to be American and this country belongs to me, this is my home now, so I have to be loyal to the U.S.. Because if I am not loyal to the U.S. I can't be loyal to my country either.

Q. As a refugee, as a survivor you would like to develop your life so that you would have some power to influence, the current situation, is that right?

A. Yes. According to my experience, what ever you face with the truth it does help, it may become painful for the first time, but later the issue became normal, that is why I want the Cambodian to think that we are the refugee, we are Cambodian and what kind of activity do you have to do to stay In the reality that we are Cambodians, we are the survivor.

Q. What would you do with this power, what is it that the Cambodians need?

A. I think the Cambodians need to know that they are lost their country, they are a refugee who escaped from Cambodia for survival and they need to tell their story to one another, that is very important to know who they are. Because a lot of Cambodians have denied, they don't want to tell their story, they don't want to talk, they thought it very shameful, and I am sure sometime they want to change, not look like a Cambodian, because they don't like it.

Q. Why do they need to share their story, how is that going to help them?

A. The reason they should share the story, during the communist the Cambodian people has been broken their trust, 100%. If you worked with the whole family, no one know that during the communist what their father is doing, what their father did for them, how did they help them, they don't know, they just think that during that time my father just leave me and my mother go to work, I was survived by the communist, the communist gave me the food, this and that. There was nothing connect with the family, it was my impression that the Cambodian who have problem, sometime I worked with ??? ???, but I would request that they have to bring their family. A 100% of the people who I have seen, they never know about their story with one another, what is going on during the communist, for instance one family, she have a daughter with her first husband and then her first husband died and she's married with another man but she always feel with that man that he

doesn't care too much about her daughter. And during the communist, she was sent to work far from the town and the husband stay home and when she come back one time her husband had left, and her daughter was home alone, and she was very mad but they never spoke to one another until they came to the U.S.. And she have one son with her present husband and one time the sponsor called me that the husband beat the wife and then he called the police himself, he wanted the police to do anything with him because he hit his wife. And when the police came, they just told him don't you hit her anymore, if you do you will be arrested. And the sponsor called me, I tried to contact them because that family I worked with them since they first came to the U.S. so they know me very well, and they refused to come to see me they say no I don't want to come to see you because nothing gonna be fixed and I just want to get divorced because too many things never resolve. Then I told them I don't ask you to divorce or stay together, that is your decision but because I knew you so long, it wouldn't be fair if you couldn't come to talk with me so I would know what is going on. And finally, they both agreed and come to see me, they didn't even sit in the same car, they came in separate car, and first I talked to the wife and after I talked to the husband, and second or third session I asked them to join together and I talked to them, do you know why what happened, and the wife told me that my husband during the communist, he doesn't take care of my daughter, during that time the communist could of killed my daughter and he run away to take care of his own life he doesn't think about my daughter at all, that is because she is not his daughter. And after she talked her husband talked to me and he says that is not true, during the communist, I was stealing something for food and the communist caught me and they want to kill me, so I have to run right away, escape right away otherwise they are gonna kill me. And this story was never told before, so telling the story and the wife knowing that the reason her husband run away that time because the communist tried to kill him. So her mind kind of reduced all the anger she kept holding a long time, could you imagine she hold this anger back since 1975.

Q. What happened after they told each other the story?

A. I just told them to take time to think about it and also, I do the genogram of both of them, I knew that legacy is a very heavy going between their lives now, you cannot change completely the parents, but you can cope with it, how to survive. I tried to tell them. I say that in Cambodia, before you get married you were single you do what you want, but when you get married all your strength, energy everything that you have, have to go for your children so you married several years, you have children, are you gonna try to ease, both of you and then the result, the hurt is gonna go to your children, that wasn't fair. So I want you to keep thinking about that and if you keep thinking and your mind never change, you can get divorced, it is your decision. And when they go back, I would go to visit once

- A. I can go down and sink. But I recover very fast.
- Q. The way you recover, you push the memories out of your mind?
- A. The way I recover by sinking, say like I slip, I have frostbite, I would sink a little bit, and I think, and then I say the reality is the truth, so I can deny it, if it comes I have to accept that it is part of the truth.
- Q. So part of it is you accept the reality of the memory or the sadness of the loss and you just say this is true, I just had a sad memory and what do you do next so you don't get depressed?
- A. I try to just get read or if out to buy I have a memory the medicine or about my send the family, I check.
- Q. But if or the you allow yourself to fully experience the memory sadness, what would happen to you, do you think?
- A. Well to tell you the truth, I don't even have time to think too much either because my mind get involved with all these projects.
- Q. Say you were sitting here and all of a sudden you had a flashback of your mother and you started feeling like you were going to sink, do you think that there is too much thinking about the memory that can make you drown and make you go under?
- A. Back when I came a couple of years ago, sometime like you will get depressed but I always think that if I let myself get depressed I'm gonna lose it, I have to move on, what is important, I say is depression helping me, no not helping me, it not gonna destroy my mind, I think the important thing is I have to want to do something.
- Q. Do you ever have the memory come into your mind and go over and over it, and you spend a lot of time thinking over and over it, have you ever had that experience?
- A. Well I do once in awhile, but I tell you I recover fast.
- Q. Do you think that is helpful for somebody to have a memory and to go over and over and just spend a lot of time on it?
- A. I think if they cannot recover too fast I think they are gonna need help.
- Q. In your own situation, when you go over a memory and dwell on it what would happen to you, what would feelings that would develop?
- A. Well the feeling that would develop, sometime I would talk with Mary, I say that

something bothering my mind.

Q. But in yourself would you start feeling despair?

A. Yes. I tell you the truth I don't have too much despair.

Q. What I am saying is if you dwell on the memory does that lead to despair

A. I think if something go on my mind too much I get scared, I get afraid that it would destroy my mind.

Q. Does it ever feel like you are trapped, that you want to kill yourself, does it ever make you feel paralyzed, down that you just can't do anything, trapped?

A. I don't feel trap, the reason I don't feel that way, I feel very strong that, like you say I am brave, say like anybody do anything to me or try to caught me for no reason, I will fight, can't stop me. Because I feel like if I can survive in travel from Cambodia to the U.S. I should not be afraid anymore I have to face it.

Q. What's interesting is that the enemy is within the mind, you survived the enemy without, there are no communist in Hartford, trying to kill you right now, right?

A. No.

Q. I think the enemy is now within your own mind.

A. Yes. Right in your mind.

Q. Is it a harder enemy to fight, the one inside your mind?

A. The one inside your mind. Well because sometime the people fail to deal with it and the people who fail to deal with it the people who block and deny the reality. I know it is very painful from my own experiences but as soon as you try to deal with it more and more and became normal, hey what do you expect you are a survivor.

Q. Have you ever thought that the man that says hey, I don't want to hear anymore about Cambodia, I have to forget that, in away he is smarter than you are because he never allows the memories to come into his mind to depress them, maybe he is smarter than you are, maybe his solution I better?

A. I don't believe that he tried to be smart or very intelligent to do that, I think the reason the men or somebody else to do that because they want to avoid the problem they get scared if they would let something on their mind, they are not going to know how.

Q. Maybe that is the best solution to spend your whole lifetime of avoiding the problem?

- A. I don't think you can avoid, because your mind is just like a copy machine if you avoid today it will come next month or next year or during the day or night.
- Q. So you think eventually the memory will push out?
- A. That is why I told the Cambodians I say that; don't you think that the medicine or anything in the whole world could cure you and make you forget what you have been through.
- Q. But in a way when you talk to the Cambodians you are offering them pain, you are saying: right now you have no pain because you avoid it, but if you allow yourself to accept the reality you are going to have some pain, you are offering them pain. You are asking them to accept suffering, them right?
- A. I wouldn't move fast like that. The patient come to see me I will talk to good memory and bad memory.
- Q. What I am saying is your approach does bring a lot of upset to people including yourself.
- A. Yes, some people are upset, but I don't push them, I go little by little. And the people when they start to talk especially when they trust you, maybe they cry in from of you, go to the part that they recall and then they always come back and talk more
- Q. Do you think it gets easier as you confront the truth, little by little as you get older it gets easier you mind gets stronger or do you think that 25 years from now something could hit you and just destroy your survival, do you feel more secure as you get older or do you think you are always on the edge of your survival being extinguished?
- A. I think I feel more secure, I feel like I know more and more because every time I go to the Cambodian people, family even though I try not to do the research or think but I always have some idea the way they behave or the way they talk, how the family copes together.
- Q. There was a famous Jewish man Primo Levi who wrote the wonderful books, he went to the concentration camp, he became very famous throughout the world, he wrote all these books about the concentration camp, he's in his 60's now and an example of a great survivor, he made his life into a very powerful life, he help the people, he wrote about it, and just a few months ago, he committed suicide, can you understand that, everyone was wondering, here was a man in the German concentration camp, he seems to have done everything right and he really made his life and the life of his family and his people into a beautiful life and then all of a sudden he kills himself.

- A. Well for me the one thing that could get me crazy, to tell you the truth, this is something on my mind. I think that because now I have a lot strings, I have a lot of this and that but if anybody killed my family for no reason, that I was going to be the only survivor.
- Q. Well actually this man, his mother was very old and she was about to die, people were wondering whether the fact that his 90 year old mother was going to die, triggered of a depression.
- A. Something like that, it could happen, it makes sense to me. When I was in the camp, as soon as I heard my father died, I lost all my thought, I feel very depressed, that's why now the only thing that will stop me, because I have a lot of string, I say here is my family behind my back, no I have to do this. I say if anything happened to my family, I don't have no idea what I would do.
- Q. You are always in danger of going down?
- A. You could panic.
- Q. Are you worried about that?
- A. I try not to worry too much, because I have to face that here I am in the U. S., I am grateful I could come here, have the opportunity, I can send money to them, that is why I try to send more and more to them, because I am afraid because if something happens, what am I going to do.
- Q. But do you think this lost, the fear of the lost can be helped out by people who love you, help you, support you, say a husband, or friend or Mary, do you think that helps?
- A. I think that helps, but not a whole lot, that's 50% help but the other 50% you have to deal with on your own. Because I think one thing that you can not cut off yet from your feeling because us you know we still have a problem by misunderstand, because one thing I know Mary help me a lot but she haven't known about my experience, how I been through all the loss that I deal with everyday. So for that matter, even though she's dying to help me, but somehow I have to deal with my own too, but I always still consult with her, I say; Mary this is hard, and she could support.
- Q. But would it be harder, if Mary wasn't there to support you, would life be harder?
- A. Oh life would be very hard. I would be isolated from the Cambodian, I will work,
- Q. What would you say where the happiest since you've been in America, did you have any happy experiences, what do your remember as being your happiest moment in this country?

- A. I'm very happy in this country, I was happy that I became a person who stand for fairness and I respect the other people and I get feedback.
- Q. What memory do you have that makes you smile, when you think about a thing that happened to you and makes you feel happy and good?
- A. I don't feel like I trapped at all, now I feel like I can go every where and I can talk the same language, I don't have to be afraid that well if you didn't translate for me or you didn't talk to the government for me, I can not talk.
- Q. What kind of traveling experiences like that have made you happy?
- A. I think one time to South Dakota, I went there and someplace I stayed in a hotel, and I always open the phone book, I always try to find Cambodian people, I try to call them, and all the time I call them they ask me. Would you like to come, it seemed like I could call and make connection and I could talk to the high class and the low class, I have no difficult with that. And also, I went to see Mount Rusher, I was very proud of the men who tried to build the place and the pictures, and I was happy to know about Indian History, it was very similar to Cambodia. I feel part of them, and also, 5 years I never see anything similar to Cambodia at all and during that time, we went to visit our friend, she worked at the camp with me and Mary, she was a very nice lady, she is a nun, her father have 16 children, they all alive, he is around 86. We went there, he was so happy to see us, he was a farmer and he dug the fresh potatoes and he cooked. J At night, it was so funny that he stay late all the time, at 11 o'clock and tried to eat with me again. His daughter says that he never did that before, he enjoyed your company so much. He always have a warm talk with me. He always says to me: you know the rich people they never know how difficult feeling, they eat they have some food left and they throw away, right away there life just like my family when they eat, they clean all the plate, and he does not brag about one of his daughter's this and that, very calm and if their family come to visit, they visit for a short time and they go, it brought back a lot of good feeling for me. At night, he turned the light of , so one time I didn't know that he was in the bathroom. I wanted to go to the bathroom too, and he was on his way out, and he hold his hand on the door and I tried to turn the door out and he put his hand over me. His wife just died a year ago, and I say OOPS! And then I say uncle Phil and he says yes; and he went back to sleep, I think he feel very guilty, I think he felt very bad. He thought may be I think that he tried to do something bad. In the morning, he came and said: I don't want you to have any feeling. I am very sorry about last night, and I say: no, you just like my father, how could I think that way and he was very happy. And when I came back to Connecticut, he sent a letter to me, and said: dear sister, I miss you very much. He never talk anything fake, I loved the way he wrote. He write about the truth, he seemed concerned, I know how hard this and that. This man, I never knew him before, it seemed like he know my entire life and also his

daughter, she is Bolivia now she sent a letter to me saying I know sometime you very sad because being away from your family is very hard, like she didn't talk about her a lot she always talk about me, and for that matter, I feel very happy, very pleased and I like her a lot.

Q. What has been the most difficult part of your new life in the U. S. ?

A. I think the first couple of years were frustrating, I didn't know what to do, I didn't know how to help my family. Keep pushing myself day by day to get a hold of the situation.

Q. If you can think five years ahead, where would you like to see your live five years from now?

A. I want to get my Ph.D. and I want, and I will travel to different states hopefully to Europe to do the research about Cambodia and writing a book.

Q. What would be in the book?

A. The book would be about the experience that I work, and I would like to write a book about something happy in Cambodia that I recall so when the people read, especially the young generation, that is not fair for them suffering traumatized all the time, if want them to have a good memory that Cambodia really have such a nice part too.

Q. What do you think about these interview's?

A. I feel very good, for this purpose, the more people know the more people pay attention inside Cambodia, the big destruction.

Q. Did you become aware of anything in these interview's that you weren't aware of before.

A. I am sure because these memories it's not to fresh and sometime I think I miss something too but not too much because your talking about more detail. It is going to take a long time, but I am glad that I have a chance to do this with you so I could recover most of my story and then when I review it I would think what part that I missed and I have some writing about my history when I came here I think 5 or 6 months after I came to the states, I wrote all in French because I couldn't write in English and I tried to memorize.

Q. What was the negative part of these interview's, if anything?

A. Well right now it is too much in this interview and I just want to leave you and see again. I don't have any feeling that something would hurt me in the future, no I have no feelings about it. But I just want to review, any maybe something that I have recall I want to add a little bit.

Q. So overall you thought it was a worthwhile experience?

A. Yes