

## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 1

- Q. Where is your hometown? How many brothers and sisters do you have? What number child are you? What kind of life did you have?
- A. My father's home province is in Kampot. As for my mother, her home Province is in Kandal. I lived in Battambang Province. My father lived in just about every Province because he was a soldier. He could not stay in any one place permanently. He lived in Siem Reap Province. I was born in Siem Reap Province, Kralanh district. If all my brothers and sisters had lived, I would have had 15 brothers and sisters. All of them died except for seven. One died in Pol Pot time. It was a girl, and she was 22 years old. She stayed in Battambang most of her living years. I am the oldest. When I grew up to be six years old, I could do some work to help my mother; I helped her care for my younger siblings, carry water home. I helped around the house because my mother was kind of poor. My mother sold some wares. She stayed in Battambang for many years until I was about . . . she stayed in Siem Reap for about four years. My father was wounded for the first time by some bullets while in Siem Reap, during the *Issarakk* time, the rebellion against the French colonialists. My father was wounded and had a broken leg, when our country was under the French colonialism; at the time; I lived there since I was small until my father was transferred from there to stay in Battambang.

When I was old enough, I went to school. I went to school for five years because my parents were so poor, I had to help them sell some wares. My father was a soldier, therefore, he did not make enough money to buy anything. He was not an officer or anything like that, he was just a private. Well then, I helped my parents. I quit school so that my younger brother could go to school instead, because my younger brother he had . . . I wanted him to have a future, because I was the oldest one in the family so I had to help. When I was 18 years old, I went to work in the factory; I helped my parents. My younger brother studied until he got the National High School Diploma, and later got the "Baccalaureate I." As for me, I did not get to go to school; I had very little schooling, so little, because I had to work to get money for my brother and sisters to go to school, and to help my younger brother more for the future. I worked at that factory until Pol Pot time.

- Q. When you went to work, sister, how many brothers and sisters did you have?
- A. I had six brothers and sisters when I went to work. All my brothers and sisters went to school. I have five younger sisters and nine-younger brothers. I only went to school for five years and quit school to help my mother because she was

very poor. She was not too poor, but those who could must all help her out. One of my younger brothers left home to join the infantry you know? At the time, they recruited some young men for the infantry, you see, so that one left. He went to live in Kampong Cham Province. Since he went to Kampong Chan Province, I had to help him with some money so that he could further his studies in the future. My father left home and my mother because he went to Phnom Penh to apply for retirement benefits. When it was done, he was about to come back home, and he had already bought the plane ticket, but the Khmer Rouge shelled the Pochentong airport, therefore he was separated indefinitely from us. He was not able to come back to us, and he was forced to stay in Phnom Penh. My father and mother were separated ever since that incident. My father and mother were separated ever since 1975, the year we were being evacuated from the cities.

My father went to Phnom Penh, my mother stayed in Battambang. My younger went along with him but he told him to go on home first. He would come home later, after the New Year. During the New Year, he was stranded there because of the shelling.

- Q. How was your family's life?
- A. My father changed from one province to another province; it was only a couple of provinces though. Mostly, it was in the districts; he changed many districts. He changed from Siem Reap to Kampong Thmar; afterwards he went to work in Kralanh; after Kralanh he went to work in Mong; after Mong, he was sent to Prey Svay; after Prey Svay, he was changed to Aur Kriet; after Aur Kriet, he was stationed permanently in Battambang; then he was not sent to any other districts afterwards. As for his life, it was not a difficult one, but not an easy one either. It was moderate. It was like I . . . my mother stayed home. She sold some merchandise, my father went to work. Before I went to school, I sold breads and other ready made food, then I went to school afterwards. When I came back from school, I must help my parents with everything.
- Q. How were their house and ways of life?
- A. They built the house themselves. It was built by them. They had some money to build the house themselves, then we started selling some merchandise. Previously, we sold them in the barracks, and then I sold . . . because my father said that it was inconvenient to sell them in the barracks and that we should sell them outside the barracks, but near the barracks, so we sold the merchandise outside the barracks. After we built the house, we bought the merchandise and stocked them in the house and sold them there.
- Q. How else was the relationship between the brothers and sisters?

A. The relationship between my brothers and sisters was close. Normally, our life was harmonious. We lived together harmoniously, but we did have some quarrels which were normal, but we did not have serious problems.

Q. Did you have any regrets about the fact that you quit school.

A. Yes, I had some regrets, but it was beyond my control. I had to help her because I saw that she had a hard time. I must help her because I was the oldest child so I had to help her.

Q. How were your parents' lives from one place to the other?

A. The one time I remembered very clearly was the time when I was already grown; it was in Maong and Prey Svay because I . . . then, I was a little older and I walked to school. At the time I was seven years old, my parents were moved to Maong and Prey Svay I went to school everyday, my mother stayed home, my father went out to work. At the time, I was not making any money at all. When they were moved to Battambang, I started making a living. I started school when I was six years old. When they were changed from one place to the other place, I went to school for two or three months like that, then I had to move along with my father. We did not stay in one place.

My family and I were moved to Battambang permanently. Though I went to school in Battambang up until I had to quit school. At that time, I was eight years old. My father and my mother raised pigs, chickens and ducks for selling and my mother sold some merchandise on top of this. I was eight years old then; my life then in Battambang was like this: early in the morning, I woke up at 4:00 a.m., I helped my mother to carry some water to fill up the water urn for bathing and drinking and then I took some French breads and sold them until 7:00 a.m. when I went to school everyday. In the evening, well you know, I took some banana tree trunks and sliced them to feed the pigs, and fed the chickens and the ducks everyday. I did this until I was 18 years old. I quit school to help raise the family. I quit school and stayed home since I was 13 years old. I helped take of all the merchandise. At home, I cared for my younger brothers and sisters, cooked the meals, helped sell the merchandise. when the business hours were over, in the evening, I gave food to the pigs, the chickens, and the ducks. At night I checked them to see that everything was all right when they went to sleep. Then, I carried water to fill up the water urns. Then I abandoned the house chores so I could help my mother. My mother was carrying the merchandise, selling them and sitting and waiting for the customers. I had to help her with everything, because she . . . at the time, her health was not very good and she had many children. When I was 14 years old, I already had ten younger brothers and sisters. That was the reason why I was exhausted.

- Q. Why did your mother have so many children?
- A. I don't really know why, but my mother had five brothers and sisters. All of them had many children, except for one who did not have any children at all.
- Q. Your mother had many children, did you have a difficult time when you were young? How difficult was it for you?
- A. I had many difficulties. In my opinion, because my mother did such hard work. When we give birth to babies, our health is not very good. With the first, the second and the third child, we are still all right. When we have the 10th child, our health deteriorates and we do not feel too well, you see? I had a hard time helping to care for all my brothers and sisters. I helped my mother with all the chores to see that everything was fine. For one thing, I helped her sell the merchandise, then I had to go buy the supplies, bringing the merchandise from the markets to sell; everything fell on my shoulders alone. My father went out to work; when he got back from work he helped me. I had to carry water to fill up the urns. I carried the fountain water which was quite far from home.
- Q. Please describe in details your father's worth as a soldier.
- A. My father went to work everyday, and came home every evening; but some nights he had to stand guard at the barracks all night, and the next morning, he had to work. He was in charge of the telephone. He was a soldier ever since he was young.
- Q. Has he ever gone to war?
- A. Ever since he was hit by bullets, he did not go to war anymore. They did not make him go to war anymore, because he was handicap. He has been handicapped since the first "Issarak" time, the freedom movement, ever since he was in Siem Reap, and at the time, I was about three years old.
- Q. What was he doing at home in the family circle?
- A. He helped to take care of everything. He helped with the chores at home. He always helped around. Sometimes he helped me to carry the water when he didn't come home too late. Whenever he was busy, he would come home at 6:00, 7:00 p.m., and he could not do very much; he could only help us a little bit. Sometimes I was very tired and he would help me carry the water. At night, he helped teach my younger brothers and sisters, because they did not understand school homework too much; they . . . sometimes, in my life, I did not learn very much, and my father helped me in my studies with the alphabets. At night, in my spare

time, I studied the alphabets, so my father was very busy.

- Q. How close were your relationships with your brothers and sisters and your parents?
- A. My mother did not read or write. My father was literate. So I always studied with my father, when I did not have any chores to do. After we finished our respective chores, my mother went in to sleep, I stayed awake to study. My father stayed around to teach me for one or two hours. I usually did not have a chance to be together with the family and have fun together, because we all had chores to do. Concerning all my brothers and sisters, I didn't love any body in particular; I loved them all equally. I was close to whoever was the youngest, whoever was the youngest was close to me; this is normal for all the brothers and sisters.

- Q. What religious faith did your parents have? What were their religious beliefs?

- A. My parents went to the Pagoda. They believed in Buddhism. They did not go anywhere. My father went to Kamphaeng Pagoda for religious ceremonies during the *Phcumben* ceremonies to convey merits to our deceased ancestors, the New Year, the fund raising ceremonies, or the *Kathin* ceremony when people offered robes to Buddhist monks in the Pagoda. They must go to the Pagoda for these ceremonies. When I was 18 years old, I helped at the Kamphaeng Pagoda all the time. During big religious ceremonies, I helped wash the dishes, and did some other chores at the Pagoda. Whenever there were big religious ceremonies, people would call me to help make food, so I went there to help. I don't know what my parents beliefs were. Ever since I was young until I got older, I always saw my parents go to the Pagoda; I never saw them go anywhere else.

Buddhism taught us not to be bad or indulge in vice, such as stealing, robbing, cheating, adultery, liquors, gambling. Buddhism taught us to follow a good path; so we adhered to Buddhism. My parents followed Buddha's precepts and used them to guide the children to follow the good path. For example, on *Phcumben*, they made some food, got dressed and went to the Pagoda and went inside the temple to pray to Buddha. He told us: first we must pray to Buddha, secondly we must pray to the monks. Thirdly, we would participate in the ceremony by putting rice and foods in the monks' begging bowls, and the ceremonies of *Bang Skoel* of conveying merits to the deceased ancestors and relatives. If we knew older folds, we must greet them, with palms joined and body lowered, so that we would be courteous; this means that our parents have a good background. We should follow our Cambodian customs, we should go to the Pagoda. We should respect Cambodian customs and adhere to Buddhism. We should go to the Pagoda, to control our feelings. We should not be tempered, but to be even tempered, to read all of those codes, and to read guide books, the Buddhist scriptures recited by the

monks which taught us to do good deeds we must abide. They taught us not to go around and walk aimless by to every monk and *cramies*, not to have a ruthless and mean heart.

During the *Phcumben* ceremony, my mother took fruits, joss sticks, candles and uncooked rice to the Pagoda. She also took some meats, such as smoked fish there to offer to the monks. People also made rice cake with bananas, pork and mung beans, coconut rice cakes, mung bean cakes, and rice flour cakes to offer to the monks to convey the merits to our ancestors who passed away. They offered these delicacies to the monks who then recited special prayers to make it known to the angels. The angels then received the messages which they then sent along with the merits to the ancestors who passed away to the other world; these information were in accordance with the Buddhist scriptures recited by the monks. The monks recited these scriptures so that we can control our feelings, to make our heart serene, and to be even tempered, so that we can convey the merits to the deceased ancestors. The *Phcumben* ceremony is the most important one; we listened to the monks reciting the scriptures, and they conveyed the merits for as.

- Q. What other religious ceremonies did your parents go to?
- A. They went to funeral services for those people who died. They went to the funeral services and donated money. If my father went to these services then my mother did not go. If my mother went to these services then my father did not go. They took turns in going to participate in social services. They could not go together at one time. Every time, there were important ceremonies, then both of them would go. They just closed the shop one day. If there were some ceremonies such as the funeral services, then, they had to take turn in going out because they were busy selling merchandises and could not go to participate in them together. They also went to celebrate the New Year at the pagoda.
- Q. Please talk about the New Year in details.
- A. The first day of the New Year celebration, we took rice and food to the pagoda to convey the merits to the ancestors and relatives, such as our father, mother, or grandparents who have passed away, so that the monks will act as intermediaries to convey the merits to them. People made sand hills. They put a Buddha statue on top of the hills. They also made little banners to decorate the hills and they would light us joss sticks and candles for the ceremonies of conveying the merits.

In the evening people played traditional games such as throwing the *Chhoong* (made from checkered scarves and tied into a bundle) between young men and young women, tug of war, playing the *ang kunh* game using the brown fruits of a tree, the game of hiding the handkerchief, hitting clay pots, having races in eating

rice cakes, and whoever won first prize will get an award; people played traditional games at the pagoda.

The first day, the monks eat the food which the people offered to them. The second day was like the first day. On the third day, there was a ceremony of sprinkling perfumed water on Buddha statues. The sprinkling of perfumed water on Buddha statues symbolize the fact that we are washing off our mistakes and sins which we have committed that offended our parents, be it willingly, or unwillingly, so that our sins and *Karmas* would be eased off, so that we won't be sinful. When we sprinkled perfumed water on Buddha statues, it means we wash up our parents; all the children must wash up their parents. We must give our parents a bath, scrubbing off their cross, and bowed to them three times with palms joined, asking them in the past, so that we won't be sinful after we died; we should made our parents happy and not make them angry. Sprinkling perfumed water on Buddha statues is like giving our parents a bath, as a ceremony of washing up our parents. We might have used unkind words to our parents since we were young till we were grown or whenever. Every New Year we had this ceremony, we had it once a year to avoid having unhappiness in the future.

My parents always went to religious ceremonies, but they would take turns. They usually did not get to go together to small ceremonies; only one of them would go to these. They would close the shop one day for big ceremonies, and three days during the New Year to have some fun, and taking the ten children out to have fun, in order to forget the troubles once a year for three days. The last day, we must do it. The third day, we must wash up our parents. We drew up the water and gave our parents a bath, and washed them up with soap to ask for forgiveness and bowed to them three times before giving them a bath. We bowed three times to them with palms joined, and then our parents would bless us and wish us prosperity and well being in the future.

Every day at home, they lit up some joss sticks to pray to Buddha and be faithful to Buddhism. They recited the Buddhist scriptures for prayers three times before they went to sleep. They lit up joss sticks before they went to sleep.

- Q. What kind of beliefs did they have in Buddhism?
- A. They had some beliefs for their won good, so that the children can see that it was the right way to do in the future, so that we will not have troubles or unhappiness.
- Q. Did your parents have any other kind of beliefs, such as in water spirits or land spirits?
- A. No, they did not have these kind of beliefs. They only prayed to their deceased

parents, and lit up joss sticks to pray to their father's picture, my grandpa and grandma, that was all you know, they had no other beliefs.

Q. When you were young, did you have some fun? What kind of fun did you have?

A. When I was young, I seldom had any fun. When I was 18 years old, then I had some fun, that is, when I went somewhere, my parents did not have to worry about me, because I went shopping. I was able to go out and shop around and not exceed the time limit. I got out of work and I shopped around. When I worked, I had Saturday and Sunday off. Therefore, on Saturday and Sunday, sometimes I went to help people on the religious ceremonies; sometimes I went out, well, and went to see a movie, and took my brothers and sisters to see a movie to get some entertainment and to forget some troubles and let my parents sell the goods at the shop. I just went to see a movie, and took my brothers and sisters out and did some shopping at the stores, or walking along the river banks to get some fresh air, and besides I wanted to let the children out to run around, to have fun, to laugh, to walk around so that they would be happy because they needed to be happy. I didn't want them to stay in the house everyday. When I was younger than 18 years old, I never had any fun time. I had no time to go out. After I was 18 years old, and from then on, I worked and so I had time to take my brothers and sisters out.

Q. Do you still remember a memorable souvenir when you had so much fun that you are unable to forget?

A. I don't think I can remember it. Before the time when my mother did not get to sell any merchandise yet, and my parents had not been transferred to Battambang yet, we lived in Moeng and I went to study at the Pagoda. I studied at the temple school and I walked and met . . . (whom, what). Both of us walked to school, my younger brother, second from me, and I, went to school. I had never gone anyplace at all. I just walked to school, and when school was out, I went back home. I never went anywhere to have fun. I did not go anywhere.

Q. When you were young, in your childhood, did you have any sorrows in your life?

A. When I was young, the sorrow and the hardships which I had were the times when my mother told me to do very hard work. Well, you see, I was fed up but I did not know what to do. My mother was poor, so I had to help her. I was fed up and tired. When I was 18 years old, my brothers and sisters got older, so I was a little bit relieved.

Q. Have you ever thought that your mother told you to do some work at such a young age, as though you were an adult?



- A. I thought that because I have many brothers and sisters and she had many children so I must help her. I have never thought that it was like I were an adult so I had a hard time, no I did not think that way. No, I have never thought that way.
- Q. At the time, did your mother have a nice house and fit for all of you? Was there enough food to feed all of you?
- A. In my house, there was enough food. The house was clean and nice as usual. It was just that I helped my parents in selling the merchandise as usual. They needed help to raise all of us up on and on. Sometimes I heard my parents talk to each other at night. I listened to them and I heard them say that they felt very sorry for me who was the oldest child and who was extremely exhausted. They thought about me, and felt sorry for me, but they did not know what else to do. They needed help. If I didn't help them, they had no one else to do the job.
- Q. When you were young, how did you feel about Buddhism?
- A. When I was young, I didn't know how I felt about Buddhism. I only knew that I liked to go to the Pagoda. When I was . . . when I quit school, I went to the Pagoda, then my father taught me some religious vocabulary. People said that religious words, religious vocabulary are guiding words, to help people walk along the right path.
- Q. When you were young, did you receive much education on Buddhism?
- A. When I was going on 18, I was at the Pagoda. I helped in the Pagoda. The monk called me up whenever there were religious ceremonies. He called me up . . . when I was 18 years old, I still had what we might call . . . the Cambodian's call this Saint Days. On Saint Days, people adhere to the eight jewels principles, and they would fast in the evening, they only eat in the morning, so that they would be able to listen to the monks reciting the Buddhist scriptures which were Buddha's words of wisdom to guide people. This would be so that we can do some meditations. When I was 18 years old, I did some meditation. I did these once in a month, to clear my mind of any problems, any unhappiness, such as mental exhaustion, or if I wanted to inform my brothers and sisters about any troubles then I would guide them some lead ways in such a fashion so they would not . . . indulge in the vices. This is in accordance with what our father taught us, like what our parents taught us. I did not have any substantial problems.
- Q. Where are your parents now?
- A. My father has been missing ever since he went to claim his retirement payments in 1975. In 1975, I was separated from my father and I stayed with my mother.

Eight of my brothers and sisters died. There are seven of us living, including me. Two of them have families now and the rest of them are still single. One of my younger brothers who is married is now living in California. My younger sister who is married lives in Allston, MA. My three brothers and a sister are still in school. Two of my younger brothers are in college; another brother will finish high school this year. My youngest sister studies in middle school.

Q. Do you remember some souvenirs or did you have any dreams about your parents or your family?

A. I would like to talk about the time of the Vietnamese occupation instead; it was the time the Vietnamese attacked the Khmer Rouge and invaded Cambodia. I stayed with all my brothers and sisters. After the Vietnamese attacked, I then . . . I was not able to go look for some rice too far since I am a girl. My brothers and sisters were still small and could not go around and look for some rice either, and they could not live like this. I wanted to go live at the border. I was the first one who went to the border. When I first got to the border, I did not know what trade to do at all, because I did not know what kind of merchandise they had to sell. I lived there for about two weeks. I spent all my money during the two weeks. I had 300 bahts, so I thought about the mobilization there was a barrack, a fort; people told me about the activities under the barrack; I asked them the permission to go inside the barracks in order to go inside the Thai territory to buy some merchandise. I went inside the Thai territory and bought some merchandise and the money increased. I carried the merchandise and I got a lot of money so I bought two packs of rice. I carried the rice from the old camp to Battambang city to take food to my mother, and I went back to stay at the border. Then I brought my mother on the way to the border and it was raining, and the bandits were robbing people. but luckily, the robbers did not rob me, I was walking you know, but they robbed the people ahead of me. When my mother was exhausted, I then rented a cart for her to ride on from Svay Sisophon to Sneung; after that we had to walk. When we walk, we must go through mine ridden fields. When the people drew some lines, then there were mines. When they covered the ground with leaves, then we should not step on them because the mines were there. I went back to the border; when I got there, it was dusk. I took my mother up to the road. I also took three other families, I was their guide. They did not know the way to the border. I was their guide and we walked to the destination. It was night time, so we took a rest. In the morning, the person whom I gave the money to buy some merchandise cheated me. Two or three days later, a person who was an acquaintance said: "well, here's some money to buy some rice." This person gave me the money, it was like she gave it to me. So I thought I was not able to buy the rice, because I did not buy the rice to raise the family because it I did, then I could only feed the family for ten days at the most. I was thinking about buying some merchandise to sell and get some capital, some profit in money to feed my family.

I went to the border because . . . I went there with three of my younger brothers and sisters, my child, and myself, just the five of us at that time. My younger sister who was married did not join us yet. Another younger brother was living with us. The sister who was already married has not gone there yet. When I got to the border, I had some money because I was trading around, so I bought some gold for future use because I did not know whether or not I will be self-sufficient. After I made sufficient money, two of my brothers and sisters also did some trading, that is Khon and Heng. My mother stayed home and cared for my child. My other younger brother was in charge of evacuating the family when and if there were artillery shelling; then he can help us to pack the merchandises and flee. After three or four months, my brother came to live with us. After he came to live with us, those with families lived in separated houses from us. Those who were single lived together. We then were trading around until . . . one day I was doing some trading. I was feeling very sorry for my child. I was thinking about the time when I had nothing at all. My child was starving, she lifted up the lid of the rice pot, it was empty, and she did not dare cry. She did not dare utter a single cry at all. Other children were eating all around her. In other huts, other children were eating around us, you see. Those children wanted to eat sweets, where as for my child she did not dare cry, she did not ask for anything, she went to lift the lid of the rice pot and saw that there was no rice in it, so she just went back to her place and sat down. When I made some money from trading, I gave her all kinds of food and sweets. I felt sorry for my child and my younger brothers when they had nothing to eat. I made some money and the Vietnamese invaded our country. The Vietnamese were shelling our country so I fled to live in Khao I Dang camp, I lived there for exactly one month, I left the refugee camp at the border and I had a lot of money. The Thai's were searching us and looking for the money, and gold. But I was smart, I sewed a salt bag, you know? I took an old salt bag and sewed some patches on it, using black cloth and whatever cloth I had. I kept my money in the patches. My brother carried the bag. The Thai's did not search the bag; they only searched my body. I told them that I had nothing at all. After they were through searching us, they did not get anything at all. I went to live in the Khao I Dang camp, so I got a tracing card to get some food. I went into the Khao I Dang camp for one month, my younger brother arrived. Three days after my brother arrived, my name was on the list to change to another camp, Kap Cheun. At Kap Cheun camp, I was teaching crochet and knitting. I made 250 bahts a month. Ever since my father was missing I dreamed about him. I saw that he came over. He wanted to ask me something and talk to me, and he disappeared for awhile, and I saw him again. I saw him walk with his back to me and he did not talk to me.

- Q. You saw him walk with his back turned to you and not talking to you; what does this sentence mean?

A. According to our Cambodian customs and beliefs, when we dream about someone walking does not talk to us, this means that the person is already dead.

Q. Did you dream about him a long time ago, or did you just dream about him recently?

A. I dreamed about him a long time ago too, you know, but right now, I sent letters to my relatives over there in Cambodia to look for him. In my own opinion, I would say that, if he were not dead, he would have come to Battambang in order to find us. In Battambang, many people knew him, he was a soldier. He also had relatives in Battambang.

Q. What do you think about this interview?

A. I don't have any opinion about it.

## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 2

- Q. Did you know your husband first? Who was the one who arranged your marriage? What did he do before you got married? What year did you get married and in what village?
- A. Before the marriage, I did not know him. My parents arranged the marriage for me. You know, in our custom, we would say that the groom's parents asked the bride's hand in marriage. At that time, they allowed us to see each other. When we saw each other, my parents told his parents that they kept me for him. It was already in 1975.
- Q. How did they establish a relationship when asking for your hand in marriage? Who was the person who asked for your hand?
- A. I don't really know about this. I guess, first, they inquired about me with the neighbors to find out what kind of a girl I was, what I looked like. They probably wanted to know if I was courteous, if I had proper manners in receiving guests, whether or not I had boyfriends, or went out a lot; they inquired about me through my neighbors. They wanted to know whether I had a boyfriend. My father had the same idea, and he also wanted to know these findings about the groom. He wanted to know whether or not he had a mistress, in case he was already married but still wanted to marry me which will cause me trouble in the future. He also wanted to know if the groom had already asked another girl's hand in marriage. He asked about everything. The neighbors said no he did not. The groom's parents were the ones who asked for my hand. I did not know the person who brought the groom's parents over. It was a person from the same village but I did not know her.
- Q. When they asked for your hand, what did they do? What did they say?
- A. Before they ask for a girl's hand in marriage, they go to the girl's house bring some fruits and some delicacies. A couple of old folks would go along. Before they ask for the girl's hand, they would ask her parents first for approval; when they agreed to give her away, then they would go to her house and officially ask for her hand in marriage. Any case, they told us about the time and day when they would come. When they came, they brought some provisions as gifts in order to ask for my hand in marriage. At that time, I didn't know what they said to one another; I really don't know.
- Q. When they first went to ask for your hand in marriage, did your parents go to a fortune teller to your fortune read?

- A. I don't really know about it. My parents never told me about it. They said that before the groom's parents asked for my hand in marriage, they first went to my house, they asked to see if the girl was free, and if my parents approved; my parents asked for my opinion, but I said that: "It is up to you, father and mother, if you agree then I would agree too."
- Q. How old were you when you got married? And you husband?
- A. I was 26 years old, my husband was 29 years old. He was three years older than I was.
- Q. What did they do before they decided on a good day for the marriage? Did your parents go to a fortune teller to get an auspicious day for the marriage ceremony?
- A. I did not decide on this matter. My parents went to see a fortune teller to get an auspicious day, to see what day would be good for the groom and I to get married and live a prosperous life.
- Q. Do you know what days are considered auspicious and which people usually choose to have a marriage ceremony?
- A. Most of the people choose the cool months for a marriage ceremony. They do not choose the month of April to have a marriage ceremony, or the rainy months. They can choose May as a marriage month too.
- Q. What did the people do on the day of the marriage ceremony?
- A. They built a hall before the marriage ceremony. In Cambodia, it was very easy to build the halls. For my marriage ceremony, they finished the hall and all the preparations, and the ceremony lasted for two days. On Friday afternoon, the monks recited Buddhist scriptures. They brought the groom in a procession to stay in the groom's hall at the bride's place. After this, the monks recited the Buddhist scriptures to bless the bride and the groom. They built the hall in our front yard. They also built the open pits at the sides of our house. When the monks recited the scriptures, the bride and the groom were in front of everybody else. The bride and the groom, the *Acha*, the older folks, the groom and the bride's parents, and the entourage, all listened to the scriptures. The monks recite them to wish us well-being and prosperity. The people reserved a room for the bride. They did not allow the bride and the groom to stay together yet. That night, the live traditional wedding band played all night long until the time they got an auspicious hour, an auspicious time. From 4:00 a.m. they started to look for an auspicious time, until dawn. If the sun shines very brightly, they would get the auspicious time when the sun rises early in the morning; they got the sun light.

- Q. What did they do when they got the auspicious time?
- A. In my time, when they got the auspicious time, they had the groom sit outside the house and prayed with the palms joined in order to get the sunlight; if the sunlight was good, then they said we will have a prosperous life. I don't really know how they got the auspicious time, the *Paylia*, I don't know how to do it.
- Q. Why did they have to get the auspicious time? Why did they perform the ceremony outside the house?
- A. I asked them about this practice and they said that it was our custom since the ancient time, I don't really know about this.
- Q. What did they do after this ceremony?
- A. After this, they did the ceremony of *Phtim*, that is the bride and the groom sit side-by-side, and lower their bodies to put their joined hands on a pillow. Then they perform the offering ceremony where they offer foods to the ancestors, announcing that the couple were getting married. Then they have the ceremony of tying raw threads around the groom's and bride's wrists. The *Acha* blessed them and the relatives do too. In the evening, they had a non-religious reception. When they have the ceremony of *Phtim*, the bride and the groom sit with their legs bent on a mat in our traditional way. The way the couple sit and bend their legs, they should do it in such a way that their legs are pointing in the same direction; they should do it so that their legs are pointing opposite ways so that their shoulders will touch each other. I don't know what this means, but this was what the older folks told us to do. They held the offering ceremony and tied the raw threads around our wrists. In the offerings, they had food, and sweets for our deceased ancestors on both sides of the bride and the groom, calling their souls to come together and be informed that the parents of both parties have married off their son and daughter as husband and wife, and for them to bless the newly weds, so they would not be angry and make the couple sick. This ceremony was to inform them about our marriage. In the offerings, they even had a pig's head, chickens and ducks. They had two chickens, two ducks. They put the pig's head in the forefront. When I got married, they used the whole pig. They also had bananas, fruits, a two of any kinds of sweets. After the offering ceremony, they would take each kind of food and sweets and fruits and put them outside the house and lit up some candles and joss sticks; they would put out rice, soups, sweets, and cakes. Afterwards, they had the hair cutting ceremony. While having the hair cutting ceremony, they had us both sit on a chair. The groom was already sitting down. To the side of the bride's chair, there were the bride's maids, the parents; the *Acha* sat in front of them. The bride came out later. The traditional wedding band played the curtain opening song, and the bride came out and sat beside the groom;

a woman and a man dancer danced around the couple and people cut the couple's hair. This ceremony was only to symbolize cutting the hair, they did not really cut it. After this ceremony, we went inside our room to change our clothes. Then we came out for the ceremony of turning the *Popils*, leaf shaped golden colored metal plate with a candle used in the wedding ceremony. The *Acha* and the people turned the *Popils*, they lit up the seven candles, the *Acha* recited the blessing formula to wish the couple well and prosperity, they turned the *Popils* around the couple. They used the people who still had their parents living; if the parents were deceased, then they would not use them for this ceremony, if these people were still young. If they were adults, they should be together as husband and wife. If not, they would not be used when "their branches were broken."

Q. What does "their branches were broken" mean?

A. This means that: "If they had a mother, and not a father; if they had a father, not a mother."

Q. What else did they do after this?

A. Then when we were sitting down with our fingers joined in prayer and resting on a pillow side by side, they put a long sword over our joined fingers, then some one from the band danced to take off the sword. Then, to conclude, they threw the areca flowers on us. Afterwards, a lady led the bride by her hand to the bride's room. The groom held on the bride's trail and went into her room too. In the room, there were older folks; they arranged to have some bananas, fruits, and cigarettes! Before we went inside, they had all of these ready for us. When we sat on the bed in the room, the bride greeted the groom with her fingers joined, three times; she greeted him with her hands up and down to the mattress, just like she would to the Monks. Then they brought some bananas, some sweets to us. The groom was given a cigarette and the bride would light this cigarette for him. In the evening, there was a reception. The reception was held inside the hall in front of the bride's house. They hired some cooks to make the food near the bride's house. It was just like doing it at the restaurant, the only thing was we ate outside the house; it was easier than at the restaurant. The reception was held until 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m. or all night. During my time, both the husbands and the wives went to the reception.

Q. You have never known your husband before your marriage; why do the Cambodian women marry the men whom they never know?

A. I don't really know why. This is done because of our tradition.

Q. If you looked back, what do you think about the idea that the women should marry



the men they never knew; was it a good idea?

A. In my opinion in . . . well, nowadays, the young ones live in a foreign country, so they follow foreign customs, it is not like in our homeland Cambodia. If we were in Cambodia, then we could reflect about this and said that we were not like other people; but if they got along well, we should let them know about our customs so that they would not act differently from our customs. What could we do if they got along and love each other? They should get married, they should let their parents know. This is quite normal. You see, in America, they follow other people. I can't predict what will happen in my family, because I have girls, and younger sisters; but if they have someone, they should not go off the limits.

Q. What does "should not go off the limits" mean?

A. To go off the limits means living together before getting married like what other races are doing. We should study the other party very carefully to see whether or not we will be able to put ourself into their care, or whatever will happen to us; this is only my opinion. But right, whether or not it is my son or younger brother, if he should fall in love with a girl, he should study the girl very carefully; he should follow up on her for a long time; he should not fall in love with her for a long time; he should not fall in love with her right away and want to marry her immediately which is not good. He should also study his own principles; he is responsible for his own self, nobody else is. He should see that she is a good girl, and see if she is not alright; he should find out about her past history; he can make a judgment based on these facts, this is my opinion. For a girl, a daughter; she should not go off the limits, such as living together with the boyfriend, you know. If she had a baby before getting married, this is not proper. This is my opinion.

Q. In your opinion, can a man and a woman love each other before the marriage?

A. In my opinion, I would say that if they love each other mentally, it is only normal. Well, I don't think that I mind this at all, but if they get to the point where they sleep together, well, it would be alright if the man is a good man. But if the man is not really the one whom she cares for so much, like he is not fit for her, well, sister, you have heard about this yourself, when the man does not listen to his parents' guidance, not respecting the elderly, then what can she rely on, if his ideas were like that?

Q. You have a younger brother, what kind of personality should his mate have which you approve of? What kind of girl would you choose? How would you study her?

A. I don't chose a girl, well, she has to have a polite personality, having relationships

with relatives. She should be courteous to the priests who go to her house, respecting her parents and the eldership, be friendly with the neighbors. If she quarrels with her neighbors, will she have peace? This is my opinion. As for my younger brother, if he loved somebody, and if he wants to marry the girl, then I don't know what to say, then he will marry her. The same way goes for my son. But in the future, just don't blame someone for the troubles, this is what I think about the matter. I have not met with this situation now, but I don't know about this generation.

- Q. After your marriage, what were your husband's and your professions? How many children did you have? What village or sub-district did you live in?
- A. I lived in Battambang city still. My husband was a soldier. He did not have any business. We lived in our own house. I left my parent's house. I started to have a baby late 1975. I was married early 1975, in May, going into June, July or August when Pol Pot clan were coming in. When Pol Pot clan just took over our country, I was not expecting a baby yet. My child was born in 1976. But when I came to the United States, they put down her birth month as February; I didn't want to bother to change it; the truth is that the birth month was really October. My husband was a soldier. He was a Second Lieutenant. He worked in the office. He had never gone to war. He worked at the "Second Bureau" (Military Intelligence Bureau). He never went to war. After my marriage, we never moved anywhere. My husband worked in Battambang city ever since. I have only one child. This child was born in the Pol Pot regime. She was the only one. Right now, my child is 11 years old. This child was born in the Communist regime. My husband died in 1977. I was married to him for only two years.
- Q. It has been 11 years since your husband died. You never have a lover, and you don't have anymore children. Why do you say that? You don't want to get married again or what?
- A. I don't know. I had a husband just that once, and I have only one child, this is enough.
- Q. There were many men who wanted to marry you, is it not true?
- A. Yes. Many men wanted to marry me; but I didn't want to marry them. So my answer to them was no!
- Q. Were they angry with you? Were they disappointed?
- A. I don't really know. I just said no.

- Q. How many months have you lived with your husband before the Khmer Rouge took him away?
- A. They separated us in 1976, when my child was four or five months old. They were informed about his position, so they took him away.
- Q. During the period of time that you and your husband lived together, were you and your husband close to each other, or do you think that you did not have enough time to know each other well?
- A. We were just beginning to live with each other for a short time, so we loved each other, definitely, until we had a child. We never had any problem with each other. When they took him away, I suffered very much and this grief could not be expressed. My husband and I loved each other very much, and we were very close. When we were separated in this fashion, it is hard to talk about my sorrow.
- Q. When you had a baby in Pol Pot regime, how were the facilities then? Did they have any doctor? Did they have enough food for you?
- A. When I was pregnant, oh! sister, talking about my pregnancy, it was horrible. When I was pregnant, there was absolutely nothing to eat at all. There was only water. I had morning sickness and it was very bad. I had a fever; when I vomited, it was to such an extent that I could not get up from the mat. I could not stand any smell of food either. After the childbirth, I had a very high fever. When I went to the hospital the doctor gave me an I.V. while I delivered the baby. But the village chief was very kind; he took me to the civilian hospital, the area 2 hospital; they gave me two liters of I.V. before I got better and the fever was gone. The fever was very high; it was so high that I did not recognize anybody, and I was delirious; I had such a high fever that when I got better I could not eat anything at all, except for fruits. You know, at that time, where could one find any fruits? In Pol Pot time, where in the world could one find any fruit? You know the rice which they rationed to us? I did not eat it; at the time, the ration was given to us; rice was quite abundant then. In my area, rice was quite abundant; I was hungry for rice, not porridge.
- My mother lived in Sneung; I lived in Au Ta Kii. They gave me some rations of rice; some people brought mangoes to exchange for rice, you see. Then some people brought green coconut fruits to exchange for rice, and I just took them to exchange for my rice. I had a big urn full of rice; I exchanged all my rice for coconuts; I exchanged rice for the fruits. I did not eat any rice. My husband did not know about this at all. He went down to plow the rice fields.
- Q. At that time, they already separated the family, right?

- A. They only had him go to plow the fields, and they allowed him to come back home in the evening; they allowed the people to go home once a week.
- Q. When you were sick, was your husband able to stay behind and care for you?
- A. When I was seriously sick, they allowed my husband to stay and care for me. I was seriously ill. They went to get my husband to come and take care of me. When we were not too sick, then we would just stay alone at home, and the neighbors would come and care for us.
- Q. When your husband stayed home to care for you, was he able to find any fruits or medicines to treat you?
- A. There were no fruits. In that sub-district, there were no fruits; people did the farming; the fruits were brought in from distant places by the people for trading.
- Q. How were the babies raised at that time?
- A. I stayed in that area and I stayed at the hospital for a long time. Afterwards, I left that area, and went to live with my mother after the baby was born. It was very hard to live in that area, you see. The area was barren and we had nothing to eat so that we left the place and went elsewhere. We went to stay with my mother. My mother's area had a better food supply; I went there because there were fruits and some other kinds of food.
- Q. In your marital life as husband and wife, what were the circumstances that you liked and which were memorable to you?
- A. There were many circumstances; for example, for one thing, he never made me unhappy. For example, when he went to work, he would come back home right on time, and we never had any disagreement. When we lived in Pol Pot regime, we starved, and sometimes we had food to eat, while other times, we were destitute and miserable, and when we got something to eat, we would share it; we were kind to each other. My husband knows what I like and want, and I know what he likes and what he wants. When I had the baby, he felt compassion for me but he did not know what to do. He was sick, so he was helpless; he did not know what to do. If we lived in the previous government, we were able to find food and medicines. If Pol Pot regime were not in control, then, we could look around and find something. In Pol Pot regime, we did not know where to get help. We are forbidden to walk around, besides our background was not so good. We did not dare go anywhere for fear that they might kill us, they still killed him though, they still took him away and killed him.

- Q. When you were young, you said that you did not have enough time to have fun, because you were busy helping your parents; was your marital life with your husband a happier life than your childhood life?
- A. After I got married, I was happier than when I was young. I was not too exhausted, I was not so tired and did not have such a hardship either.
- Q. Do you still remember any fond memories with your husband?
- A. On Saturdays, we went out to have a good time. We went to see the movies, then we went to eat at the restaurants. We were intimate and we went out to have fun together. For example, when we wanted to see a movie, we would go out and see a movie, he and I. When he had to go somewhere, and if he had to go somewhere else to work, he would let me know, or he would come home for a short while to inform me. When he went somewhere, outside of his office work, he would take me along too. He never failed to do this. Even when he was invited to a banquet, he would take me with him too.
- Q. What were the times when you were sad while you were living with your husband?
- A. I was dejected while living in Pol Pot regime. I was afraid that they will take me away to be killed you see? I was worried about this kind of possibility, after they found out about us. Earlier, people asked him to go to Thailand, but he refused to go there. The Khmer Rouge arrested my husband in 1977.
- Q. What is the reason that the majority of the Cambodian widows do not get married again?
- A. In my opinion, I think that, if I get married again, my happiness will not be affected if the second husband is just like the first one. But what if he is not nice to me because I have a child? Would he be nice to my child? Would he abuse me? What if he is nice to me only at the beginning, how would I have felt then? Am I able to live with him? There has not been any case like this yet, but I am prepared for the worst; this is my own opinion; so I decided that it is better for me not to take another husband.
- Q. The majority of the widows have the same idea as yours. Do all the second husbands abuse the children from their wives' previous marriages?
- A. In my opinion, we are afraid that it might happen like that. If the second husband is as nice as the first one, or if he is not as nice, or better yet if he is nicer than the first one, then we will not regret our action. We would like for him to recognize

the fact that our child is not his own flesh and blood, it is true, but when he loves her as though she were his own, then it would be alright with us. What happens if we married him and he did not think that way, if he said: "hey, you, go wherever you wanted to go, I don't care." Whether our child goes to school or not, he does not care; this is what I am afraid of sometimes he is nice to me when he still loves me; after awhile he has enough for me, then I do not wish to have a right for the second time. The unhappiness resulted from being separated from my first husband. My husband was gone (dead); then I take another husband, well, it is like, my wish had not come true, because we are separated for the second time for me. It would be difficult for me. I don't want to see myself taking a husband, then a second one, a third, and a fourth; this is difficult.

Q. If the man loves you, why then would he not love your child?

A. I don't really know why.

Q. Do the Cambodian men who married the widows love them, or did they marry them to be their wives so they could wait on them?

A. I don't really know. But in the old days, I lived in the barracks. I was aware of some things that happened there. I have seen the majority of the women acting like this: some of them were widows and got married again, their second husbands had children from a previous marriage. After the husbands left the house, the wives abused the children. When the husbands came back, the wives were nice to them, that was the way it was, you see. I am talking about the women. As for the men, this was rarely the case. Mostly, it happened this way; I have seen this happen. If the wife's child happened to be a girl, when she was small, nothing happened and everything was fine, when she was grown, the step fathers, they began to try to molest her, attempting to rape her. If the wives' child was a boy, then they did not dare bother him too much, when he was older since he would be mature. This is my opinion.

Q. If you were to get married again, would you think that you would betray your former husband?

A. In my opinion, I don't think so . . . Normally, for the men, when we died, they will take another wife. For us, if we can still stay alone then we will; if not, we will take another husband. If it were I, I don't think that way at all. I don't know about other people's thinking. In my opinion, I think that we do not betray our husband at all. Normally, when we got a divorce, then it will present some problems, but if they died, you know, usually when they died, the men don't wait very long; it depends on us; if we wanted to get married again then we could.

- Q. Do women enjoy being loved, and pampered? Did you think about your husband's praises?
- A. Oh, there is nothing I can do about the fact that I miss the memories between my husband and I.
- Q. After you husband's death, did you receive enough love from your brothers and sisters, relatives, parents and friends?
- A. Yes, there was enough love, well, I truly love my husband. Well, it was like, we were separated from each other. My family stayed together until the Vietnamese invasion. We never went anywhere and left our family. We all got separated, I don't know what to do.
- Q. According to the Cambodian custom, do the Cambodian men still love and want to marry widows?
- A. There are some who do; it is not like there is no man who does not. But in Cambodia, according to the custom, when the husband died the wife mourned him for about two or three years, depending on her wish. Whoever could mourn this long would do it, if she loves her husband. Some other widows did not think too seriously about this, and they got married again. But, in the old days, when I lived near the soldiers' wives, when their husbands died in the war, most of the wives who did not have any children, you know, would become Buddhist nuns for exactly five years. One of them whom I know became a nun to convey merits for her husband for five years. Afterwards, she became a laymen. She went to live with her parents. She never took a husband since then. Therefore, most of the Cambodian widows do not get married again.
- Q. Are the men who love the widows, single, widowers, or old men? What are the reasons behind their wish to marry widows?
- A. From what I know, sometimes, that widow got only a child. The man would analyze her to see whether or not she was really a widow, or whether or not she was a widow in name only, and was going around having lovers, he also analyzed her character. Did she just say that she was a widow? He would observe her character, her personality. Sometimes he would see that she had a good personality. She knew how to run a household. When he saw that, well, he would love her of course. Some other men saw that the widow had a lot of money, a lot of wealth, they planned to deceive them once married them. There were some young and old men who loved the widows, and the majority of them were after the money, because they needed it.

- Q. So, then, those who wanted to marry you were really interested in your money, were they not?
- A. No, I am talking about life in the society in which I used to live with other people, the majority of the men were like this. The man who loved me was a mature man. He was not too young, he was about my age. He had some money. In fact, he told me that he would give me some money, I told him that I did not need money.
- Q. Why did you not agree to marry that man? Did this happen recently?
- A. I don't know why I did not agree to do it. He wanted to marry me here, in the U.S. Most Cambodian widows do not want to get married again. Doctor Mollica has probably heard about this, right? Some people had different ideas from mine. I have my own ideas.
- Q. What are your ideas?
- A. My idea is to try to work hard to raise my children to adulthood. When they are grown up, I will be old, and I will go to live in the pagoda, well, like . . . I think I will go live in the pagoda when I will reach 60 or 80 years old.
- Q. Do you know any widow who got married again?
- A. Yes there are, you know, there are many of them indeed who took another husband.
- Q. Do they have a happy life together? Do they have any problems at all?
- A. I don't really know about this matter. I have never visited them or had a relationship with them. In the U.S., I would go to work, and have never even gone to my neighbors' houses. I would leave the house early in the morning, and come home in the evening. I usually don't go anywhere. When I have some business to attend, I usually traveled a long distance. I only saw those women get married again, but I don't know whether or not they had a happy life, because I did not get a chance to see them.
- Q. What are your beliefs in Buddhism?
- A. My family had faith in Buddhism. We do not dislike the Christians. Christ preached us to do good deeds; his teachings are good, but I am still a Buddhist; I have never gone to church. I have read the Bible, and the Bible did not teach us to do bad deeds. I do not dislike one kind of religion or another; I do not have this kind of thinking at all. For example, I have a place for worship at home; I have



candles and incenses, and coconuts with husks adorned with rolled banana leaves, and Buddha statues. Every day, mornings and evenings, I must pray to Buddha once. In the morning, and evenings, I must pray to Buddha once. In the morning, I prayed to Buddha by reciting the prayers three times and in the evenings, I pray after I get out of work, I must pray to Buddha. Sometimes I would meditate for half an hour in my house when it was quiet. We meditate this way, you know, people call it meditation, when we sit and pray and meditate, our mind is serene, and we think about death, about our dying body; we are reasoning about our body when it dies, it leaves but a bundle of ashes, and we can not take anything along with us; everything seems to be mull. I was thinking about our body, and I did not think about anything else at all. I was only thinking according to Buddha's teachings *Dharma* which stated that: everything which gets inside our body will get rotten.

Q. Everything which gets inside our body will get rotten; what does this sentence mean?

A. For example, whatever food we eat, any kind of food that is eaten will smell foul when it comes out as a bowel movement even though the person who consumes it is beautiful or handsome; their feces smell as foul as any other person's feces. This is the fact. A shirt or blouse is nice when we look at it before we wear it; but when it touches sweat, it will smell sour; this is just like smelling foul too. This is Buddha's philosophy. When we meditate, our thinking centers around this concept. Well, it is like . . . we won't know how it feels unless we have meditated before. Sometimes, we think about something, it is like our inner feelings; before we meditate, we recited Buddha's *Dharma*; we would recite the "*Neak Mo*" three times, you know. While we were reciting the *Neak Mo*, we were doing meditation. Sometimes, the Gurus gave us the "*Puttho*," a kind of prayer, to recite in our mind until we get to a stage when we lose all contact; this means that we really don't feel anything, you know? We don't even know it when someone walks around us; it seems like our soul has left our body and is gone. We were able to see something, such as sometimes . . . . As for me, I have not seen it, you know? According to the old folks who meditated, they saw it; as for me, I have never seen it. I only saw nice visions, I saw that I went up there. I was flying, I saw gardens, and house up there, the things I used to see, you know? For some people, they saw, well, like, when we die, our body will swell up, and the worms were wiggling in and out of it, and the vultures are coming all around them.

Q. Why did they see worms and vultures like that?

A. Well, it is like, we should not . . . for example, when we see something, we should not covet other people's wealth, we should not tell lies to other people, we should not do bad deeds. We should only do good deeds. It means that, if we are

married, we just live peacefully with our husband not steal other people's husband or wife and to make them suffer, to cause pain and misery. How would you feel if it happens to you? I would say that, if we do good deeds, when we die, we would not be able to take our material wealth with us at all. When we die, if we were too greedy, would we be able to have those wealth at all? The answer is no; we will not get anything at all.

Q. What are Buddha's teachings?

A. Buddha taught us not to steal other people's wealth, not to covet or to be too greedy, not to kill one another, not to swindle to the point of killing the victim.

Q. I have heard people talk about the "long-haired old man." Why is he named in this fashion? Do you have any belief in him?

"Long-haired old man" is actually an old lady who claims that she is possessed by the spirit of the long-haired old man, and who claims to have possessed a healing power and telling of fortune.

A. In the old day, in the life of Buddha, in every life that he lived in every form of life that he experienced, and every time he taught us to do good deeds. Buddha's life was recorded in books such as in the *Vessantara Jataka*. In my own opinion I think that the long-haired old man adhered to Buddha's teachings; this is what I think. Whatever she did, she did not . . . like everybody else, because she held religious ceremonies in accordance with Buddha's teachings she taught us to adhere to Buddhism. I don't really know too much about the rumors that she is able to cure diseases, such as mental illness, or broken arms which she could cure, like what happened in Washington, D C. She has been treating illnesses for such a long time now, like 24 years. Previously she was the wife of the district chief. I learned about this from people who used to know her before. After she held religious ceremonies and gave to charities, she treated some illnesses like mental illness and broken arms. If she could treat it, she would tell us that she could; if she could not treat it, then she will tell us that she can not treat it.

Q. Why could she treat some people, while she could not treat others?

A. I don't really know why it was so, but from my observances, I have seen examples of cases involving sorcery and voodoo in Washington, D.C. When I went there to visit, I met an old lady who was about 70 years old; when she was 45 years old, someone used voodoo on her. She went to a doctor but he could not cure her. She went to the capital, Phnom Penh, and up to now to get treatment, but the doctors could not cure her. One day, she went to see the "Old Man." The "Old Man" was a lady, but people called her "Old Man," because the spirit who

possessed her was an old man, so people called her "Old Man," who is the "Long Haired Old Man." When the spirit possessed her body it said that the victim must be treated.

First, the "Old Man" calculated the victims' birth date, and he made some more calculations, and said that there was voodoo involved and that the victim suffered from voodoo practices used on her, and told her how long she has suffered this too. The two had never met. The victim saw that all the predictions were true. The Long Haired Old Man had her prepare some offerings ceremony for her own teacher. He himself did not want to take anything. He wanted two bags of areca nuts, two bags of quick lime, two quick limes, two big bundles of joss sticks, five candles, about nine feet of white material, two chews of tobacco, and five dollars. He did not want many things; this was all that he wanted whenever he treated someone, something like two bottles of perfume and two candies, that was all. When he made some calculations, he said: "if you want to be cured, take a chew of tobacco and betel and areca nut which the medium has chewed. He then gave the victim a chew from his mouth, and he poured holy water on her for only three days once a day; you know, pouring the water? After the pouring water ceremony, the victim discharge something about this long; it was discharged from the anus, from below; it looked like a long strip of pork, like part of the big intestine, you know; it was discharged and it was bright red. She brought it to us to look at. She said "oh no; my big intestine is torn off." She did not have a bowel movement; she said that she felt a pain in the stomach; she went to the bathroom to try to have a bowel movement, when it was discharged.

Q. Was it like a parasite?

A. It was not like a parasite or whatever; it was like pork; it was red. I have seen things that were discharged like needles, you know, our needles, in the urinal pot; I saw them with my own eyes; the person vomited needles, fishing hooks, and nails, rusty nails, real nails; there were many kinds of things which were discharged. I even witnessed one instance when he was pouring the water on the victim, and she reeked like carrion, having such foul smell like decaying corpses. The person just had that kind of foul smell.

Q. Was it the patient who was receiving the holy water who reeked?

Note: It is believed that voodoo is done by the use of buffalo's skin, needles, nails, etc., which were put inside the stomach by voodoo magic.

A. Yes, it was the victim. He treated many kinds of illnesses.

Q. Why did the patient reek like this?

- A. I don't know why the patient reeked. I guess because she was a victim of voodoo practices. It is like, the voodoo person used the liquid from the corpse to do this practice; I don't really know much about this; but I smelled the stench, just like a decayed corpse emanating from the patient. He treated many kinds of illnesses; I report what I have seen, but I don't know what happened previously. But how, I know, because I saw what he has done when I went to Washington, DC, and I went to see him treat that patient. When I was in the Philippines, I have seen him treat someone once. He went to stay in the Philippines. He stayed at a pagoda where there was an English man who was ordained according to the *Mahayana* faith, meaning he ate food mornings and evenings, but he did not eat meat. He had the Long Haired Old Man sleep in the Buddhist nuns' quarters, because the medium is a nun. He treated a Vietnamese women, not a Cambodian. She had no money at all. She was not qualified to be resettled in the U.S. because she was gravely mentally ill, because she would eat even feces. He did not know about her history; well, then the old women folks knew about the patient's condition. No one in the group had anything to offer, no joss sticks, candles, or any offerings. He treated her according to the circumstances, according to the means. He poured water on her for seven days, once a day. He did nothing else to the patient. He only poured water on her for seven days. He rapped her head with his knuckles nine times, and hit her head three times with the water bowl which he used to pour the water on her, thump, thump, thump, then the patient was all right, and she was normal; she did not even eat anything at all.

Now, I don't know where she is; she was a pure Vietnamese woman. I knew about him ever since then. I only believe that he did not do bad deeds; he only did good deeds. He used the money from his services to hold religious ceremonies.

- Q. What kind of beliefs do you have in him?
- A. I believe that he has faith in Buddhism. He never did anything to cause us any harm.
- Q. Does the Long Haired Old Man have any faith in Buddhism?
- A. Yes he has faith in Buddhism. He holds religious ceremonies, and took part in the building of the pagoda in DC; he traveled very much. I will talk a little bit about his biography. He accompanied Venerable Uong Mien everywhere from California on. He went along with the Venerable to raise the funds for the building of the pagoda in DC. First the Venerable bought a land of 1 km. square. This land of 1 km. square was first bought for \$10,000. This land costing \$10,000 was used for the monks' quarters. The Venerable asked all the families whom he knows well to contribute for the building. He said: "the field of merit"; this is the place where we have to help Buddhism to possess a religious should so that our

nation can be born. If we don't help each other, then we wouldn't be able to survive religiously. He went around and recited Buddhist scriptures or held all kinds of religious ceremonies for people all over the states to get money to pay off the land, then he would build the multi purpose hall. The hall is now finished. He wanted to build . . . when he has some money to spare, he will build another temple, just like those in Cambodia. The land in D.C. is very big; it is also a quiet place there. But the place is near the churches and other places, including Chinese and Korean churches.

Q. What kind of beliefs do you have in the Long Haired Old Man in connection with your family?

A. About my family, well, my beliefs are that he is all for Buddhism which teaches us to be good, and not to cause any trouble.

Q. Did you get in touch with him often?

A. I have not met him too often; I did call him on the phone once in awhile; he usually does not stay in one place; he traveled to many places; he went to all the states, including Minnesota, Canada; he traveled all over the U.S. Now she is 74 years old.

### INTERVIEW 5 - PART 3

- Q. When did the Communists take control of Cambodia? What did they do to the people? What did they do to you and your family?
- A. They came in on April 17, 1975. My husband and my brothers all wore civilian clothes, because our country was insecure, so we should take precautions, we did not dare make any decisions. My younger brother, the one who moved to California, first worked with an airline company. He worked with the fueling system, an office work. It so happened that, that day, he rode his motorcycle to the airport, and luckily major, what is his name? Well he was a pilot, and there was a spare plane, an empty plane. He was holding a gun, and he told all of us to leave: "If you don't go, I will kick you to death." My brother thought: our country is peaceful now, why should we be leaving?
- Q. Where did he want all of you to go?
- A. He wanted us to go on the plane and head for the Thailand to escape death, but those people did not believe him. When they did not believe him like that, my brother said: "our country is peaceful, why are we leaving? We don't want to be separated from our mother, father, brothers, and sisters." So, he just got on the plane and left alone. There was an empty military plane in Battambang City. Thanks to this spare plane, my brother came back. Whatever happened, even if my brother had died, I would not have known. Why do I say that if my brother had died I would not have known? Well, because in the office, he had his picture, and he put it on his desk. In the picture, he wore a necklace with a pendant bearing an airplane insignia. Then, the Khmer Rouge asked him: "are you a pilot?" My brother said: "I am not a pilot, I am just a villager." When he saw that picture, he took it out and threw it away to hide his identity. If he failed to do this, he would have been killed, or shot to death right at the airport. No relatives would have found out about his fate at all. I am talking about my younger brother, the one who went to live in California. I stayed at home and waited for his return. I stayed home and waited for everybody's return so that we won't be separated because of our country's insecurity.

The Khmer Rouge did not kill the military personnel, they took them to welcome Prince Sihanouk. All of the high ranking officials went to welcome the prince. My husband and my brother then thought about this and discussed the situation. They agreed not to show a high ranking insignia. They wanted people to believe that they were just privates, so that they won't be killed. They were taken out to live in Aur Porng Moun, in the Ta Kriem side, going down from the Krapeu mountain, in Battambang City. They were in that state. My mother was

evacuated from the city along with all the people, out of the city. Well, a Pol Pot man told them: "All of you leave the city, take all your belongings with you. You are not allowed to come back." He told them in secret, because he was not suppose to do that. It seemed like he had compassion for the people so he told them: "All of you leave the city, if you don't, you may be . . . . At the time, my mother, all my brothers and sisters, and my other uncle who lived in Traeng and who came to live with us, all left our home.

I tried to stack my mother's belongings on a bicycle and took them to a place which took the whole night. I carried our belongings and went back and forth to Sneung for three trips. When I carried our belongings out of our village, our family was separated. My younger siblings went to join their groups, my brother-in-laws went along with my husband. As for my sister's children, my mother and I, we all went together and stayed in Sneung, because my father was doing some farming in Sneung. He was able to stock rice there. We had ten bags of rice for stocking, so it was an ideal place for us, we stayed there. My father was then separated from me: he was in Phnom Penh. I was separated from my father, my mother was the only one left now. I took my mother along with me to live in Phneuv. All my brothers and sisters also went to live with me there. After about four months, my sister came back to live with me. But, no, she did not really live with me; she went around with the mobile units everywhere. As for me, one day about one week after the evacuation, I was called, along with those people who used to hold jobs during the old government, to go back to work. We were not allowed to stop working. At that time, the group's leader seemed to know about me. He knew that previously I held a job my name was on the list, and that at the time, I was not working. He told me to go back to work. One day, he called me to go back to work. I went back to work. I got to the place. My other older brother was a group leader. There was a car which took people away to be killed. I did not know that they took people away to be killed. When I came back from work then my brother told me about it. They just took the people away to be killed. They put the people in cars that were like taxis, and took them away to be killed. I didn't know about it, so I got in that car. My brother said: "Oh, you won't survive if you ride in that car; you will be dead, because they just took the people away to be killed in these cars. The cars just now came back." They took me to ride in one of those cars too. But, actually, they had me ride the car and took me to Roka, and they made me walk straight to a factory. I worked in the factory for about two weeks. I said to myself: "Oh, no, this will not do from what I can make out, it is a hardship." I then asked the Khmers Rouges permission to stop working. They did not allow me to stop working. They said that, even if we are married, we must, let's say, build up ourselves in order to strengthen our new life. At the time, I kept silent and did not say anything. One day I fled.

Q. Did they have you sleep at the factory?

A. Yes they made us sleep there. We also ate there too. At the time, we still made food to eat ourselves; we did not have to eat in the communes. Yet, well, it was like, next week, they start the communal eating, and I fled that same week. I left, and I made it look unsuspecting. I left the day I was supposed to go to work. I just didn't report for work, I sneaked out of the factory during my working hours. I walked until I got to a place called Ampil Prahaong. I was afraid that I would be arrested: but, it was good luck for me. There were four persons who fled that time; one of them went to Beung Krasal, a place just beyond Sneung, you know his/her relatives lived in Beung Krasal. So did not say anything. I said that I was going to Sneung. By chance, there was a truck coming by, it was a military truck carrying some merchandise. I said to the driver: "Uncle, please let me ride along." I told him that I had something to do. I told him that I would like to go along with him because my brothers and sisters over there in Sneung, they . . . . So I pleaded with him to go along too, because I will get off in Sneung. The truck was heading for Pailin, you see, I will get off in Sneung. He then searched me and found nothing, so he said: "Let's go, let's go." At that time, the Khmer Rouge were not too strict yet, they were kind of relaxed. When I got to Sneung, my mother and brother said: "We see your face now, so then you are not dead." They thought that I had died. You see, they had not heard from me at all for two weeks; there were no news about me at all. At the time, they started to form the groups already, you know, when the groups were formed, individuals were broken down. I used to take rice and exchanged it with some people who had eggs, and who did not have rice, oh . . .

Q. Where did you get all those things from?

A. Well, they were left over from the things which I brought from the unit. I brought even salt, sugar, monosodium glutamate, and medicines. They told me to take all our belongings along when we were evacuated, and not to leave anything behind. I took all these things along with me from home ever since the beginning. How could I not take them with me? I was able to carry them and made three round trips. If it had not been for me, my mother would have not been able to get anything at all.

She was not able to take anything along at all. We arrived in Sneung, and we stayed there for about two to three months. Then they moved me to Au Ta Kee. The groups which were there were for married people. I did not want my husband to stay in that group, because I was afraid that they might stir up troubles for him and take him away to be killed. I was afraid that the Khmer Rouge would do that to him, and that was why we just wandered around, you know. We stayed in Au Ta Kee. First it was fun, there was, well, no . . . water, there was only water, water everywhere, and there was nothing else. When we transplanted rice seedlings, the water was up to here. There were some leeches. I was afraid of



leeches, and I ran and ran. We lived there for about a year. The following year, I tried to persuade my husband to go back to Sneung. My husband said: "Oh, let's not go there." But I said that I must go there. I said: "If you don't go back there, then I will go there." So, I made up my mind to go back. When I went there to live with my mother, and the Khmer Rouge said that the people from Au Ta Kee were not allowed to live in Sneung, and were supposed to go back. My mother settled there first. They brought a vehicle and took us back. It was then that I got pregnant, you know. My mother said . . . I could not eat anything. I was so sick until I had to be hospitalized. I was sick, sick, sick, and besides I had morning sickness symptoms. In Sneung, there were some provisions to eat, for example, there were fruits and sweet potatoes. The land there was sandy, but when we grew vegetables or fruits, they would grow. All we had to do was to make little mounds, and sometimes, we didn't even have to water them, but when it rained, they would turn into sweet potatoes. We did not have to worry about them, you see. When it was sweet potato season, we just grew them. We grew mints, coconuts, pumpkins, watermelons. I wanted to drink orange juice.

- Q. When you went back to Au Ta Kee, what did the Khmer Rouge do to your family?
- A. They did not abuse us in anyway, they let us stay in our previous place. I spent my life there, I was pregnant, and I was sick. Well, the group's leader "reeducated me"; he said that I suffered a hypochondria' that one particular group's leader said that I was not sick. But, thank goodness for one old man, he was a village's chief, a position called *Knak Phum*. He saw that I was sick and he went to check on me to see whether or not I was really sick. Therefore, he wanted to know the truth. He lived nearby my hut, and he came over to spy on me to find out whether or not I was sick. Actually, I was sick, I did not eat any food. My husband went to work, I was seriously ill. The village's chief didn't know what to do, so he came over to my bedside and touched me. My temperature was very high, so he instructed a man to go fetch my husband so he could care for me. The other chief said that I was not sick, and that if I was sick, I should be sick at the rice fields and the dams. When I was ill, my husband came home from the dam site, and he was not able to work. I was so ill, that I could not eat anything at all, and I was taken to a hospital. I stayed there for about two weeks. I was hospitalized at the Po Pee hospital. They gave me an I.V. before I got better; afterwards I got my strength back ever since that time, well, I was not as seriously ill as I was before.
- Q. Were there doctors and medicines at that hospital?
- A. At that hospital, there were some Cambodian doctors. They came over to the hospital and gave us some medicines. First they gave me medicines. When the temperature got so high until I lost consciousness, they gave me injections. I

didn't know what the injections were, I didn't remember, but they gave me injections. The injections were all . . . . Then they gave me I.V. The I.V.'s were in a glass container, the kind that was used in the previous government. I saw it, it was a real I.V. that they used. I stayed in a hospital in Battambang city, Po Pee hospital, adjacent to the main hospital. I stayed in that hospital for two weeks before I went home. I was kept alive by medicines. I did not even eat rice.

- Q. What year was it when this happened?
- A. It was 1975, you know? I was seriously ill at the end of 1975. When I went back home, the village chief, well, he had a row with the group's chief. It looked like he did not like to "suppress the work force"; he was angry about it and he left. He asked my husband to go along with him. But my husband did not dare leave with him because he was afraid that I could not find him when I got back. I scolded him then he . . . . When I was about eight months pregnant, I told my husband that if he didn't want to leave, I would. I left again. I went to deliver the baby over there in Sneung. I went there one month before my husband followed me. He went to Sneung after I did. After my husband came for about two weeks, I delivered the baby. My baby lived with my mother in Sneung.
- Q. When you delivered the baby, was there any doctor?
- A. No there wasn't. There was only a midwife, an experienced midwife, she had been a midwife since she was young until she was old. She was kind of a midwife for the village, you know? There was no medicine. We just boiled herbal roots and things like that and drank the broth. When I delivered the baby, my health was not very good. Right after the delivery, I could not eat any food. I could only eat a small amount of porridge. After giving birth to the baby for about ten days, I could hardly walk, because I was too weak. It was just about that time, they sent me back one more time. I went back there just like they wanted me to. When we went back, about three months later, they found out about my husband's history. They took my husband away, this happened in 1976. My baby was only three months old.
- Q. Did you have enough milk to nurse your baby?
- A. At the time, my health was improving, because I had taken some herbal medicines. I had a kind of finger swelling disease whatever it was, it was called "*pih*," whatever. You see, I still have some scars until now. After I delivered the baby for more than ten days, I had the finger swelling disease, you see; after I had the fever, my hand was sore; after hand was sore, I had a fever. I still have some scars until now. Two or three months afterwards, the Khmer Rouge found out about my husband's biography. They took my husband away to be killed. Well,

you see, it was just like they killed him, because I did not know what happened to him. They said they took him to a hillside to clear up the bamboo forests whatever, I didn't really know where they were taken him to. I had not received any news from him or about him at all ever since 1976.

Q. How did they find out about your husband being a soldier?

A. At first, they would have not found out about his life at all. But, there was a person who knew my husband and she reported on him three times. I did not know that person either. The Khmer Rouge did not tell me who the person was. But someone knew about him, the Khmer Rouge called him up he did not realize that they took him away to be killed at all.

Q. Did you see your husband being killed?

A. I have not seen them kill him. When they took him away, they said that he was going to clear up the bamboo trees. But I did see a military man wearing my husband's watch; this was the reason why I knew that my husband was being killed. If they had not killed him, he would have come back. No matter what, even if we were to be separated, he would come back, and I would hear from him.

Q. Did you have enough milk to nurse the baby? Did you have enough food to eat?

A. Yes, there was, you know. As for food, my husband usually found some fish for me, you see?

Q. Was the person who reported to the Khmer Rouge on your husband's previous job, a Communist?

A. I don't know if the person had any problem with my husband. Well, the person was not a military person, she was a business woman. I don't know whether or not she hated whomever, but that was the way it was. She singled out many people, at the time, they took away quite a few people. At the time, she wanted to curry favor, and to show that she was a super person, and did not really think about anybody at all. After I lived there for quite a long time, I could not endure life there any longer. I fled and went to live with my mother. In the past, I have lived with my mother many times.

Then, I went to live with my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was still alive, you know. She was still alive, so I lived with her. They killed my husband over a year before I was able to leave that place. Right after they killed him, I didn't dare run away because I was afraid that they would follow me and try to arrest me too. Therefore, I did not dare leave just yet. The whole year when I stopped going to

my mother's house, when I went there the last time, the Khmer Rouge were kind of less strict than before. The harvest season was over, you know, we only had to build the dam and went to check and repair the rice fields' dikes, and checked to make sure that the water was flowing in the creek. The Khmer Rouge said that we could go anywhere we wanted to, because we had nothing else to do, so they said we would go anywhere. At the time, they let us go, but they were not responsible for our safety. So I thought, well, they were not responsible for us.

One day, there was a neighbor who tried to persuade me: "Should we leave? If you are leaving, then go with me." She lived Krapeu. As for me, I lived way in Sneung. So I told her that it was alright. I knew the way from Krapeu to Sneung, I knew some of the ways to Sneung. One day I said: "Alright, let's go." I didn't know what to do because I had no pass. When we had no pass to go from one zone to the other, we were not supposed to leave. I had an idea, and I thought: the village chief could not read or write, well then, what was I to do? Then one day, an idea was dawned on me, and I thought: I must write a fake pass. It so happened that after I wrote the fake pass, I went to the village chief, and I told him that I had this pass to come and visit someone, but you see, I didn't go there to visit I went there to stay permanently. So, I stayed there permanently with my mother-in-law. In 1977, I didn't get to go there yet. It so happened that, about in the middle of 1977, one of my younger sisters died. She was the older sister of the sister who was married. She was in the mobile unit, called a sub-district's mobile unit, a girl's sub-district mobile unit, you know. They had her go to grow banana trees; she was not killed by anybody while she was growing bananas, there was a rain storm, lightning and thunder. The lightning struck my sister at the work site. The lightning struck her dead. According to Cambodian superstitions, the person who was struck by lightning was not dead yet. In Sneung, people had some superstitions. They took a white sheet and covered her up; they made sure they did not touch her. In the morning she was still not alive. The lightning struck one of my sisters dead. There was another sister, she was struck by it too, but she was only unconscious.

Q. Did you see her body?

A. I did not know what it looked like. I did not go to see it, but my mother went to see it. I was still in Au Ta Kee. When I got to Sneung, my mother told me about it. I noticed that my mother had lost a tremendous amount of weight, so I asked her what made her lose weight. She grieved about my fourth younger sibling who had died more than a year ago. She could not eat, all she was doing was to cry because of her love and compassion for her child. All my brothers and sisters cried. As for me, I did not know about this at all, oh, you know, I did not know about her death. I didn't know why I was not informed. As for the young people who worked in the mobile unit with her, they all cried because they were

compassionate. You see, my sister was a gentle person. She was not talkative, and never complained about anything at all. She could cook and she was a big helper. Because of all these qualities, my mother cried and said that she felt sorry for her. All of the people there cried. There was somebody who went to inform my mother. She took a motorized pedicab to go and fetch my mother. As soon as my mother got on the pedicab, a tire blew out, my mother said: "That was a premonition telling me that the girl had died, she was not alive." They took her body and buried it according to our custom. My mother grieved for her for over a year, and I did not know about it. When I got to her hut, I was just chatting on and on with her. Then she cried and told me about her death. I did not know about anything at all, because we lived far away from each other, and we could not write letters to each other. I was not starving while living there. There were some fruits which they always gave us. Food was not too scarce there, it was not too bad there. But as for work, usually, we worked all night through. As for me, I had a family, I was the head of a household, so they did not make me work all night at all; they did not make me sleep at the work site. I only had to work, and wake up at four o'clock in the morning and leave for work, and return home at seven or eight in the evening. I worked very hard. By the time my child came home and ate, it was late.

- Q. Do you know whether or not your father passed away or was alive?
- A. I don't know whether or not he was alive or passed away. I was separated from him, and he lived in Phnom Penh city quite far away. I don't know what happened to him. After Pol Pot regime, I had not seen him come back to our village. This is the reason why I thought that he was not alive. If he had been alive, he could come back and look for us, because there were a lot of relatives in Battambang city, besides, there were many acquaintances too.
- Q. How many of your brothers and sisters died?
- A. She was the only one who died, the one who was fully grown, that was the only one who died in Pol Pot regime. I was not starved in Pol Pot regime, food was not too scarce. It was during the Vietnamese occupation that . . . I will tell you the story. In Pol Pot regime, beyond Sneung, around Au Amboh area, called Ta Tay orchards, was a place reserved for the prisoners. I don't know where they came from, but all of them had chains on their legs. They worked, and got whipped, and they cried out like the oxen did when they got whipped. Sometimes, they took them out to be killed nearby.
- Q. Do you happen to know what offenses have these prisoners committed?
- A. I don't know what offenses they have committed. When we asked the military

men about this, they told us that the prisoners did not come from our area. All of them were coming from other far away areas. How could I ask them so many questions? I only dared ask them something, and that was it. I have not seen them beat the prisoners or mistreated them in any way, never; it was a clean cut affair. As for my family we did not live together. My younger sister went to stay in the mobile unit, she went to work in different directions. My younger brother, Sorn, worked in the vegetable or fruit orchards, Heng worked in the orchards too, my mother worked in other area, doing some other things. My youngest sibling, the youngest girl, stayed home alone. She was about five years old at the time. My mother came home at night. My younger sister who was married and had no children yet, went to work. Her husband went to work with his own group, and she went to work in her own group. Sometimes, it was either two weeks or one month before the couple saw each other. Now, my mother and my younger sibling, for instance, they stayed together days and nights. They saw each other at night, and they worked during the daytime. Behind our hut, we got a piece of land to ourselves. When we built a hut, the Khmer Rouge gave us a piece of land behind it for us to grow various vegetables. My mother grew banana trees sugar cane, and all kinds of potatoes.

Q. What kinds of labor did they have you do?

A. They gave a quota to those who transplanted rice seedlings. They gave a quota . . . They wanted us to transplant the seedlings very fast. As for me, I didn't really know how to transplant the seedlings. I could not transplant them as fast as other people did. The Khmer Rouge in my area never "re-educated" me once. I tried hard to work, I tried hard to pull out the seedlings. They never "re-educated" me once. They never scolded me once. But, I worried about my husband. When I got home, I saw my child . . . you know. My child was taken care of by other people. When I went to work, there were . . . I went to work quite far away. When my child was over a year old, the Khmer Rouge did not make me go to work too far from my hut. When I went to work, they had one or two children carry younger children to the rice fields to be nursed.

Q. So then, was it the children who took care of young children?

A. Yes, they were children. When the children were about two years old, they had the elderly care for them and weave baskets too. One elderly lady cared for two or three children. If there were many elderly, they made them weave baskets, and different things. I lived under Pol Pot regime until 1979.

Q. After you gave birth to your baby, they took away your husband, how was your life then?

A. They made us work, but it was nearby my hut. I helped cutting vegetables in the kitchen hall. I was not in a very good health, so they had me work there.

Q. At the time, was your baby in good health? Is your child still alive?

A. My daughter is still alive now.

Q. At that time, did you ever worry about your child being dead?

A. In Pol Pot regime, my child was over a year old. She was seriously ill once. She had a high fever. First she had diarrhea, then she had a fever. When she had a fever, I gave her some medicines, but she did not feel better. They had some medicines, and they gave some to me. They were fever reducing medicines for children. I had nothing to exchange for them. The Khmer Rouge confiscated all my gold and silver. I had nothing left. I took my child to the hospital. She was seriously ill. They told me to take my child to the hospital. My child was very sick, so sick that her forehead was "firm" or whatever people called this. Her hair was brittle and dry, it was like it had no oil, the hair was stiff. I thought that this child would not live. One day, the clinician said: "Do you have anything with you?" I said: "I don't have anything. I only have a bundle of clothes, and a child." He said: "Alright then, get on the motorized pedicab." They took me to the Po Pee hospital, you see. They put her on the I.V. using about a liter of the I.V. liquid before she got better. When she did not have the fever, I went back home. She was hospitalized for about a month, and I went back home.

Q. After the ordeal, was your child seriously ill again?

A. She was not seriously ill again. When my child was over a year old, about a year and three months old, I went back to my mother's village. I went back to Sneung, and that was when I lived with my mother.

Q. In that regime, how did the Khmer Rouge educate the people? How were the meetings conducted?

A. Oh, talking about the meetings, well, it was like, each week, they chose Sunday to convene a meeting the whole day. When I went to Sneung and they held those meetings. In 1987, they had meetings. I didn't know what they talked about at the meetings. I went to sleep whenever I was tired. They could talk about whatever they wanted to. Sometimes, I came back from work at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., and they called us to go to the meeting. We had the meeting and we wouldn't get home until 11:00 or 12 midnight. At the meeting, they talked about our labor, they wanted us to have strong goals, so that our targets won't be weak, so that we won't be the enemies, whatever. I was the enemy, you see. Sometimes

I looked for a place where I could lean on, and then I went to sleep because I was exhausted.

Q. In Pol Pot regime, was your life a happy one, a normal one, as easy one or what?

A. In Pol Pot regime, my life was all about sickness, that was all. Ever since they took my husband away, well if I, it was like they mistreated me, or taking me to be put in a prison. I have not experienced them at all.

Q. Well then, your life under Pol Pot regime, was not a hardship, right?

A. Well, yes, my life was difficult, you know, but, well, life was difficult, but it was difficult in one way, that was, I worked hard, and the Khmer Rouge did not scold me to hard, they worked just like we did. Even if I worked slower than they did, they did not say anything at all. But, when I worked, I never played around unless I was sick and fell with a thud, then, I would stop working. If I was not sick, I would go to work. I always went to work. The unit's chief never saw . . . the activities, the unit's chief . . . my hut and the unit's chief's hut were near by like that.

Q. If we compare your life in Pol Pot regime with that of other women, your's was better off than other women's life right?

A. Well, I said it was better, but it was not really better, it was just enough for me to bear. The Khmer Rouge did not mistreat me. Well, it was just like we . . . they have never called me up and scolded me or threatened me, or like, threatening to kill me, all of these never faced me, never, during that time. But, there was a day they were following some people who used to live in Au Ta Kee. They wanted to arrest them and they interrogated my younger brother. He accompanied me and we just got to Phnom Sam Peo mountain. I was going down, that was the only time and besides this incident nothing else happened. The Khmer Rouge said that he would kill me because he caught me red handed in Ta Triem, he would kill me in Ta Triem. Two or three months later, he saw me going to Sneung, he always said he will kill me and that was why I had to issue a fake pass to go there.

Q. Did the communists mistreat or kill the people who lived in your village?

A. There were some people whom they mistreated like those who ate quite a bit of good. They were starved so they stole the commune's good. They took him to be reeducated. They might mistreat him and make him carry dirt, whatever.

Q. During that time, what made the villagers suffer and frightened the most?



A. In my life, during that time, I have seen a person . . . what was his name? I have forgotten it by now. They called him up to be reeducated three times. The high organization ordered to have him killed. They have warned him not to say irresponsible things. He still said something like: "Oh, the Vietnamese are coming to attack us" this day or that day. He kept saying that. When he worked he cursed the Khmer Rouge and the militia heard him. The militia hear him. He should not say anything at night when he went to sleep. When he said something the militia heard him and took him away that same night. I didn't even know that he was taken away to be killed that night. He stayed far away from my hut. His hut was next to the rice fields and the orchards when I walked across that way, I saw his shirt. It was stained with blood. I have never seen any killing. I only saw the blood stained shirt just that one time. That was the only time. I never saw anything else. I never saw them torture people tight before my very eyes, never. I have heard rumors, yes. He was in a different group than mine but we were in the same unit.

Q. How did you feel at that time? Have you ever through that one day you will face the same danger as his?

A. In my village, everybody thought that they will die one of these days, but when? Nobody knew how long they would be alive. But we always worked, and we did not talk. Well, some units' leaders were good. They told us not to say anything when we went to sleep at night. If we wanted to spare ourselves, we should grow Kapok trees right in front of our hut. They just said one Cambodian slogan, that was all. But if we had nothing to eat or whatever went wrong whether or not we had anything what could we do about it? Where could we find it? As for me, I was luck to have my younger brother work in the orchards. He got rabbit's meat and sometimes he got some fruits for me. He got some fruits because he was made to tend the orchards such as corn fields, for instance. Well, I was able to live. He could not finish eating the rabbit so he marinated it with salt and dried it in the sun and sent it to me.

Q. All the people in your village and other people thought that one day they will inevitably face the danger of being killed, right?

A. Yes, but we never said it. We thought about it in our heart. We thought that we had no hope to be alive.

Q. During the Pol Pot regime, what were the times that made you the happiest?

A. There was no day when I was happy. How could we be when we never saw our relatives' faces? When we saw one relative's face, we missed another one. We never talked about anything. We just suffered inside our mind. At the time, I was

- skinny, I was sad. I thought to myself I don't know when I will die.
- Q. How did you feel when they took away your husband to be killed?
- A. When I knew that my husband had died, I didn't know what to do. I didn't dare say anything. I kept silent in order to live to take care of my child so that she would live. At nights I was sad. For instance, at night I thought about my father and I cried when I went to sleep. I was grieving. I was yearning for the previous times when I struggled and my husband did not die. And now, he could not escape death. My feelings were those of anger. Well, it was like I thought about the past about the memories which I shared with my husband whereas in that regime, I could not talk about it. All I could do was to grieve and not utter a single word. Well, I got thinner and thinner, weaker and weaker. There was no day for me to be happy. I saw other people and they would talk to me but I didn't want to talk, I just wanted quiet.
- Q. In your village, did the Khmer Rouge divide the people into a caste system: the "old" people and the "new" people?
- A. They grouped the people into units and they mixed them together. In that village, those people who had previously gone to live in the jungles for a year were classified as the "old" people. Where as for us, we were evacuated from the cities on April 17 and we were called the "new" people, the newly liberated people. In my village, the old liberated people were appointed unit chiefs, or village chiefs, you see. The newly liberate people were just plain citizens who served as examples to others. But, in my village, well, it was like I was lucky in a way. Let's just say that it was luck in that period of time, the leader was an old person but he did not mind us so much when we committed an offense when we talked. But previously, the reason he ordered someone to be taken out to be killed was that he/she was hopeless, so they would take the person to be killed when they tried to warn the person but he/she would not listen, then the person would be killed. When the high organization reeducated you for four or five times, and the militia caught you in the act, then . . . for example, about talking, they told the person not to say something, and he/she still did it. Well, it was like this, at the time, I didn't know where this person got a radio from I did not ask people about the real story and I didn't know where the radio came from. I was afraid that the Khmer Rouge had established a channeling system of communication, an elaborate network system, and I would be dead if someone has put the blame on me. I didn't know where this person got the radio from and listened to it for him to say that the Vietnamese were coming and to cause his own death this way.
- Q. How different were the old people's way of living from the new people's?
- A. I, being the new person, and the old people went to work at the same time.

Whatever the time set for work, we would leave then; whatever time was set for finishing work, we would stop then. But about the ration, as far as I know, the important unit chiefs never ate with us, the people. The group chiefs and other chiefs ate with one another. But the old people and the new people all worked together. Their work was not different in nature. In my village, people worked together as a team. As for the people in the mobile units, they got more pressure than we did, a lot more pressure and they worked very hard. For example, the old people would finish work at the latest at 6:00 PM when the sun sets. Well, for the young or single people in the mobile units, they stopped in the evening when we could no longer see each other's faces. Besides, at night, they also went to build dams. You see, these people were in the mobile units. My group never dug the ground. The Khmer Rouge did not make those with two or three year old children dig the ground.

Q. How was the aspect of the way of life of the new and old people's children?

A. The new and old people's children . . . I didn't see many children at all. There was only my sister's child. The children were gone. We could not find any children to send them to the vegetable or fruit gardens at all.

Q. Did the people eat in the communal halls in your village?

A. In 1976, the people ate in the communal hall, you know. In 1975, we still ate independently, but in 1975, they made us start to do the farming. In my area, those who did not know how to farm will have to learn it. They made these people learn to pull out the rice seedlings and harvest rice. This was what my group did anyway. I don't know about other groups. I never went to other units. I never went anywhere at all.

Q. Did the Khmer Rouge allow you to have pots and pans?

A. Yes, they did, you see. I had a coffee pot to boil water. We were allowed to have a pot. They confiscated our cooking pots and pans, but they did leave one pot for us. We could use the utensils to ladle water to cook food. We could also put food in them, and we could use them to ladle or store water as usual. They even distributed some dishes to us too. Whenever we went to eat, we brought our own dishes. They had the soup at the hall. We brought our own plates and spoons.

Q. Were there regular foods for consumption?

A. Around the Sneung area, food was not too scarce, we were not starved. Vegetables were not too scarce either. If they ate porridge, it was not a watery kind of porridge. The people there ate thick porridge. They also gave us a

plateful of corn too. During the corn season, we would get corns and during the pumpkin season, we would get pumpkins. We were able to grow many crops in my area, therefore, we were not so . . . . We grew Asian zucchini squashes, pumpkins. We also grew a lot of cucumbers.

Q. Were you able to cook the meals yourself?

A. They were strict previously, and they would not let us cook ourselves. When we were able to find anything, we were told to put it collectively. In 1978, they wanted us to put things collectively too, but for example, when we went to the rice fields and we had a break for more than half an hour after lunch, we would take advantage of this opportunity to go look for some fish and broiled it ourselves. We could not make a soup. We would wither broil things or bake them. If we had zucchini squash, we just boiled it and drank the soup. Well, they told us to eat independently, right? We grew vegetables around our hut, those which were not grown in their gardens or in the collectives. They had no vegetables to make soups. They had two people go to look for some fish. They got some of them and when they walked across people's houses, each one of them would take a fish, or a vegetable, and they would make soup to eat collectively.

Q. Was there enough meat and fish?

A. They had fish, preserved fish and other foods. They were not plentiful, but they were enough. Well, we had just enough. We did not starve. But they confiscated everything, like gold, and other things. I had no gold. They confiscated everything, you know? They collected all of them. I was afraid of the, so I gave everything to them.

Q. How were the clothes? What kind of clothes were they?

A. They did not take our clothes, but I . . . we dyed our clothes black with some resins and they were not evenly dyed, you see. But I cut up nice materials and made some hammocks which I gave each to my younger siblings, so I didn't have to keep them. I had nothing. I was really miserable when the Vietnamese took over. It was during that time that I really had a hardship.

Q. Did they give you a ration?

A. Yes, they did. Later on, they did give us some rations. But they did give us a large ration. Some of us could not even finish the ration. My younger sister, for instance, could never finish the food. There were a lot of foods. She could not eat the foods they gave her. They told my mother, they told her that her child could not finish her food and they kept it for my mother and they told her that they gave

the food which her child could not finish to her. <sup>eat each night</sup>

In my area, they held a meeting once a week. On Sundays, they gave us food, including desserts for us to eat. When there were meetings, and we returned home in the evenings, they had food for us. In the evenings, people gathered up and ate together. The Khmer Rouge had things for those people to eat. Every week, they would have a different kind of dessert. Sometimes they gave us oranges, while other times they gave other things. Around my area, they made sugar cane sugar by the huge jar-full. In my village, people grew sugar cane for the sugar, you know? They grew the kind of hard sugar cane to make sugar, you see. Sometimes, my younger sibling sent me many jars of sugar. My life in the Vietnamese occupation period was harder than under Pol Pot regime if we talk about just food.

Q. During that time, what kind of labor did they have the people do?

A. They divided up the labor according to those who were married and those who were single, and those who had children would go with those with children. As for those who had young children, they were told to work close by their huts, or else, pulled and transplanted rice seedlings. They also clear up the grass in the gardens near the huts. Those who were singles, or those who were married but had no children, were told to go do some labor far away from home, such as build the dams and work at night. If one was still single, and had no children, he/she was made to go with the mobile units. Life in the mobile units was very hard. One of my younger siblings joined the mobile units. One of my brothers who went to California first served in the mobile unit. They made him go to places which were quite far away. The people in these units went far away to do labor. When he went to join this mobile unit, he went to . . . when he was in it, the Khmer Rouge were choosing a medical person to treat people. Those who were "old" people, and were liberated prior to April 17, 1975 were given high ranks. There was a young man who was a old person's son. He was the son of a previously liberated man and he was young. They made my sister a medical person. But when the time came for them to have medical training, the trainer came over and explained about the medicines which were all written in French. My sister used to study in the old government, so she was able to understand everything. The young man could not understand anything so he went to sleep. Talking about the medicines, if we had a fever, all the young man knew was the "rabbit's dung" medicines, and he would not know what other medicine to use. There were many good medicines, you see, and he did not know how to dispense them. My younger sister went to help with medical services in Kampiing Puoy mountain in Battambang province. They had her dig the ground and build dams in the day time. They put her in . . . They measured the ground in meters and assigned the task to each group. The people worked days and nights. They turned on the lights, and the people dug the ground at night, and in the daytime as

- well. They only had three, four, or five hours of rest each night.
- Q. When did the people in the village start work when did they finish it?
- A. The people in the village got up every early for work. All the Khmer Rouge knew was that the villagers would go home when the sun sets. They vided the workers into different groups. For example, the women with infants who needed to nurse their babies at about 12 noon, they set up the time for something like this. They had some children taking these infants to their mothers right to the work sites. I am talking about my work group, but I don't know about other groups, you see. In my area, the group . . . each village was divided in this manner. It was the same everywhere. They divided the people into groups. For example, they would tell us our duty in each cooperative. In Sneung district, there was a cooperative in Sneung district.
- Q. What kind of labor was assigned to the widow and singe people?
- A. The widows who had no children were made to join the mobile units, they were not allowed to stay in the villages at all.
- Q. What was the reason for them being widows? What does "have no children" mean?
- A. Some of the widows' husbands died or got sick because of malaria because they were made to go clear up the bamboo trees, to cut off the bamboo trees. They had malaria and died. For some others, their husbands were killed. Still others were widows due to death or separation previous to the Pol Pot time. For example, the family members were separated, the husbands went to one direction and the wives went to another direction. When they went to a place, they were already separated. They lived in . . . they got married with the person who lived in the same village they did.
- Q. Then, even though they were married, if they had no children, they were put in the mobile units without exception, right?
- A. Those who had no children must serve in the mobile units and went to do some labor far away. They put the married people in a separate mobile units.
- Q. Was there electricity in that village?
- A. Yes, there was electricity. They brought a big generator and used it. In Kampiing Pruoy village, there were many sick people.
- Q. How many hours of sleep did those people get in one night?

A. They only had five hours of sleep in one day. At that time, many people died because of sickness and old age. Some people had a kind of illness, while some others had other kinds of sickness. At that time, they pushed the people very hard. They said that we must push hard. They had good medicines. At the time, they had medicines from China. At the time, my sister was a medical person. She said that there were medicines from penicillin and other kinds of medicines to quinine for the treatment of malaria. They gave good medicines to the mobile units. When they ran out of medicine they went to get the supplies from Phnom Sampew mountain. My sister was sick. She passed blood in her bowels. There was about this much blood in the container for spilling.

Q. What kind of medicines were there in the Pol Pot time? How did they make them?

A. I don't really know about them. I was told that they were herbal roots. They mixed the herbal roots and boiled them. Afterwards they used the residues to mold into pills. People called them "rabbit's dung" medicines because of the shape and color.

Q. During that regime, what kind of labor did they make people do?

A. At that time, in 1978, they divided the people into work groups. Children who were six years older were allowed to go to school and study alphabets. The children who were from six to eight years old studied alphabets. They taught them that way. They had classes. After studying two hours, they were taken to gather cow manure for fertilizer, in order to make . . . . They put the fertilizers in the rice fields. These children were only allowed to study for two hours a day. They had these children do this kind of work or other kind of work, collecting this, or that, and pulling grass.

Q. At that time, were the children able to study and retain anything?

A. They could retain anything. My younger siblings also went to school like other children. Like I told you earlier, working during that regime was like, leaving early in the morning, and coming back home at night. My mother also went to work. My younger sibling stayed home. At that time, my mother was 50 years old.

Q. What kind of work did your mother do?

A. They made her a cook. Sometimes they had my mother go to the rice fields and care for the children. Sometimes they had her go along with those people who were pushed very hard to plow the fields, and cook for them at the work site;

sometimes these people worked in the vegetable or fruit gardens. Her work varied somewhat. She worked at many places. She was changed to a different place in one or two months, or she was changed to another place in another one or two months. There was no permanent place for her to work.

Q. Did the people ever have a rest period?

A. At that time, the only time for us to rest was on Sundays. In six days, we were only free on Sunday, just that one day. But even on Sundays we were not free at all, we went to meetings. All the people in the mobile units must attend the meetings. The villagers also went to the meetings. Sometimes they called us a meeting. I only went to this kind of meeting that year. The meeting was about moral issues. The culprits committed moral offenses. How did they commit such an offense? He had a wife and she had a husband, and they still had an illicit love affair. They had this affair secretly; it was not between the people, it was between the unit chiefs. They did it secretly. The unit chief fell in love with the unit chief, it did not matter whether or not the couple were old or new people. Sometimes, an old person fell in love with a new person, while some other time, it was vice versa. This was a violation to the morals code, and the Khmer Rouges would take them to be killed. They would have a meeting, then they would take them to . . . . At the meeting, they would tell the couple. They put them in a truck, I didn't know where they were taking them to. They wanted the couple to go to the meeting to show their faces, then they tied their hands in this fashion, to the backs, both man and woman, the same way.



#### INTERVIEW 5 - PART 4

Q. In the Communist regime, how did they organize the people?

A. In the Communist regime, they made the people work. They divided the people up into groups. There were groups and there were units. There were separate groups of young girls, young men, married men and women without children in one group. The single people in one group, married people with children, with small children, and grown children, were in separated groups. In the plowing seasons, we should plow the fields. In the rainy seasons, we should plow the fields, then we had to pull up the rice seedlings and transplanted them; we put the rice seedlings in bundles. The girls were made to pull the rice seedlings. The young men were made to plow the fields. In the dry seasons, we did vegetable and fruit gardening. Some people had some garden lands so they did gardening. In the gardening season, we would do gardening. This kind of labor had no set of time or schedule. All we knew was that early in the mornings, when the roosters crowed, we would get up early and left for work, that was all. When it was dawn, and we were able to see things, we started to pull up and transplant the rice seedlings. When we had to pull the rice seedlings, we had to wake up very early. As for transplanting the rice seedlings, we had to wait for the morning when we could see before we started the transplanting. The people who had to pull the rice seedlings had to get up very early in the morning. When the sun sets, they would still say that it was still light enough to see things, and they made us work until night time when we could no longer see one another before we could stop working. Working in those work sites allowed us time to sleep at night. Sometimes we were called to meetings on top of the labors. At the meetings, we were told not to talk to one another. There were militia men who monitored us. Sometimes when we talked about our hardship, we would be taken away to be killed. They did not allow us to live. For this reason, even though we had such a hardship, we must endure it, no matter what kind of living conditions were imposed on us. But in my area, we were not used to starvation to that extent, you see. I have heard rumors about other places where they got runny porridge, that's it.

Q. When the people went to work, were they allowed to have a rest period?

A. No one was free. The elderly were made to weave deep baskets. The elderly men were made to work on bamboos to make shallow baskets, and mortars for use. They made us work. They did not let anyone be free. The ones who were free were those with infants, or who were nursing them. When they were not young enough to be still nursing, starting from three or four years old up, they all had to

work. They had the four year olds go to school, and their mothers went to do some labors. They had them go to school for one or two hours and they went to collect cows' manures to make fertilizers. They set up a group, they had a teacher to teach the children, so we could work. In Pol Pot regime, nobody was free.

Q. Did they ever let you have a free time? For example, they had a day of rest in a month, or they had a number of days of rest in a year?

A. Previously, they did not let us have any day off. Later on, from 1977 to 1978, it seemed like they let us have one day off in a week. But, we had a day off and we still had to go to meetings to listen to the "Organization" talking about the development, to teach, and to guide us in working very hard in order to get the most profit. Therefore, in fact, we did not have time to rest. If we had some relatives who lived very far away from us, we were not able to cross from one zone to the next one either. They did not allow us to cross the zone line back and forth. The exception for that would be for us to have a task to fulfill, for example, the organization told us to go somewhere, then we were allowed to go there. For example, we lived in Au Ta Kee, and crossed over to Treng. If we only took the time to stop by Treng for a short while, then it would be alright, and it would be fine if the village were near by the road. If it were far away from it, then we weren't able to reach it either.

Q. How was the relationship between the husbands and wives and children? Were they allowed to live together?

A. Three or four months could have passed before the husbands and the wives and the children could see one another once. Some people met one another once a week. All of these depended on the situation. As for us workers, we carried out the Khmer Rouges' orders and we just did the jobs. The husbands and the wives never had time to stay together, you know? They were always separated. Well, it all depended on the areas. In some areas, for instance, they sent the son or daughter to work in the vegetable or fruit gardens near by and he or she could go home at night, but most of the time, the husbands, their wives, and their children were separated. They did not stay together. When they were sent to plow the rice fields very far away from home then they would have to spend the nights there. They let us take our belongings along because we would come home in one or two months.

Q. Every time that the people see their families, how long could they stay together?

A. The most time they spent together would be a short while, then they were separated again. They did not spend so much time, like, well, we would stay together for two or three days when we had not seen one another for a year or so,

then we would be able to see one another once, no. Well, it was like, when we were separated once, the most time we could see one another was one or two hours, then we would be gone again, and this was the uttermost time that we could see one another. Well, you see, life was not easy, it is such a hardship.

Q. During the Pol Pot regime, was there enough hygiene?

A. Talking about toothpaste, there was none. There was no soap either. There was nothing at all. They gave us some clothes once, and we dyed them black with the *makhliur*. They gave us white clothes, white materials and we dyed them. They made us dye them. We trampled them in the mud to make them black. We would boil the *sangkae* leaves to get the black. Then the clothes gradually blackened, and we wore them to work. Talking about soaps, we didn't have them. If we had some soap left from the old government, the Sangkum, and we hid them, then we could use them for washing our hair. Well, now that I think about it, we did not have them, after using them for awhile, they were used up.

Q. How did you go about to clean your teeth and your body?

A. I did not clean them at all. Well, I just went to take a bath, and when I finished that was it. I had no time for brushing my teeth or whatever, we had nothing at all.

Q. At the time, was there anything you could use as a soap substitute, for example, to wash your hair and so on . . . ? Did everybody have a lot of lice?

A. Oh, talking about lice, of course, it was a real fact, one hundred percent true. But, when it comes to washing the hair, we had nothing to wash our hair with; we used fruits to wash our hair. We used *Sambuor* fruits to wash our hair, you know, our *Sambuor* fruits? They used them to wash their hair. They also used a kind of lime, you know. We had no shampoos.

Q. How did they make lime?

A. I don't know how they made it. I never knew how lime was made, those people made it. As for the *Sambuors* they took them and crushed them, and squeezed them with water. They squeezed them to get out the shine, and then strained them with the *Krama*. They threw away the residue, and used the remaining water to wash their hair. They just washed their hair this way nobody had long hair; we all had short hair. As for the lice, one hundred percent of us had lice. We also had scabies. Well, we walked in the water, we worked hard so we just walked in the water, or any water mixed with cow's manures. After a long time, we got scabies. We had no medicines to put on them. We only had tamarind leaves which we

squeezed with salt for soaking. At night, we just wiped our feet. At that place, some people did not even have mats to sleep on.

Q. How did they organize meal times? Could the people eat at home? When was the year?

A. In 1975, they evacuated us the first time, so they let us eat independently. Beginning in 1976, they divided us into groups, but we still did not eat collectively. It was not at the beginning, but about the middle of 1976, starting from March, 1976 onward, we started collective eating. First, the area groups ate collectively. They put ten families in a group. They divided us into groups, then into units, then into villages or cooperatives, cooperative one, cooperative two, cooperative three. In Sneung village, there were five cooperatives. Then they divided this village into a sub-district. In the year 1976, but skipping almost to the end of the year, we ate among ourselves in the units. When we ate collectively within the groups, we had nothing at all; in our houses we were allowed to have a kettle to boil herbal medicines. They confiscated all our dishes and pots and pans. They had the soup bowls which they kept at the cooperatives. The Khmer Rouge said that we could not have them in our huts. At night, if our huts had any kind of fire, the militia is monitoring us to see if we were cooking something.

Q. Were the foods which they gave you enough?

A. They made us eat collectively in groups. The foods which were given us were rationed. They ladled out the foods to us, they didn't know whether or not we had enough to eat. All they knew was two ladles for each person, that was it. For example, there were ten people in a group, and there should be 20 ladles of rice, and they just gave us 20 ladles of rice, no more no less.

Q. Did they give you rice at that place?

A. During the harvesting season, they gave us rice. When the rice seedlings transplant season arrived, and we had to work very hard, we ate porridge.

Q. Was it thick or watery porridge? Were there fish or meat?

A. It all depended on the groups. When they could find some vegetables, then they would have vegetables to eat. But, in my area, there was not much problems in our ways of living. When they gave us porridge, it would be thick porridge. But when there was porridge, there were also corns. They rationed corns for us, but they . . . there were many corns. During that season, in other areas, the porridge would be watery.

- Q. Were the ways of living between the old and new people the same? Did they eat the same thing?
- A. The new and old people ate the same thing, but the groups', and the units and the villages' chiefs, ate among themselves separately in that fashion, but we could not bring the foods home. Talking about anything that we could not eat, they just did not give it to us, period, with one exception, when we were sick and bed ridden. Some of those who were bed ridden were taken to the hospital.
- Q. How was the marriage ceremony conducted? How did the women take care of themselves during pregnancy? Did the women have menstruation in that period?
- A. On the wedding day, the Khmer Rouge just called the parties involved. At night, they called the girls who were coming back from work. For example, on Saturday, they had to marry, let us say 10 or 20 or 30 couples, depending on the areas, and they would call up the couples to hold one another's hands, and the organization would give them words of guidance, and the ceremony was finished, there was nothing else.
- Q. Who was the one who arrange the marriages? Did they get the parents consent?
- A. There was nothing at all. In my area, they did not ask for the parent's consent at all, not at all. They called the brides and grooms to be and asked them if they would agree. But some other areas, they didn't even bother to call them at all. They didn't bother to ask whether or not the concerned parties agreed. Well, they just paired them and married them off. The unit's chief, who was the leader, just married them. Whether or not the parent gave consent to the marriage. "In other places, they didn't have time to ask: do you agree to marry him/her? My cousin's marriage was arranged. He was not even aware of it. That evening, they called him to a meeting. When he went to the meeting, they just called his name. . . . They would call up his name, and they would just marry him off, just like that. They had him hold the bride-to-be's hand. They called up the boys and the girls names in pair, one couple at a time. When they paired him off the way, he did not agree to marry her. They took him to be punished. If it had not been for the Vietnamese invasion, he would have been dead by then, he wouldn't have a chance to see his parent's faces at all. They took him away, abused him, beat him, and starved him. They also made him do hard labor. It all depended on the area. In some areas, they would just ask the concerned parties. In that period, they did not ask the parents for a consent. They only ask the concerned parties for their consent, that was it. If the concerned parties agreed, then they would marry them off immediately. They would not wait for them to ask their parents for consent. The parents were not the ones who asked for the girls hands in marriage like in the old government. Well, they just paired them and married them off. This is why is

was quite difficult in that period. There was much confusion. The marriage was one of the turmoils. The moral code violation was another one. These people were already married, but they violated the morals code because they committed adultery. Usually the units' chiefs had plenty of foods to eat. Sister, you already knew that, in Pol Pot regime, sometimes, the units' chiefs cooked, and we would not know the difference; we went to work. We were not able to talk about it. We knew about them, but we did not dare do anything. We only asked for peace, and to be spared, so we could live to see our children's and grandchildren's faces in the future. We did not know when we will die. Everything changed, nothing was sure anymore. We had to endure the suffering so that we would be able to see one another's faces. We will think about death when that day comes.

- Q. When the brides and the grooms held one another's hands, did the Khmer Rouge give a banquet to the newly weds?
- A. Well, there was nothing at all, absolutely nothing. All they did was call the concerned parties up, and married them off. There was absolutely nothing at all. But, later on, in some areas, it was not so strict. Therefore, during the wedding ceremonies, they would just cook different kind of dishes, and give more rice. For example, if they usually got porridge to eat, they would get rice instead. As for the pregnant women, nobody paid any attention to us. Nobody took care of us. We had to take care of ourselves. They made us carry water in tin buckets suspended from a pole across our shoulders, pull off the rice seedlings and carry them, just like the regular workers, until we would be very big and could no longer do any work, then they would . . . . Sometimes, when the women were pregnant, the Khmer Rouge made them be the cooks, help cut the vegetables; they did not have any free time. They worked until delivery time. There was no doctor to check your tummy, there was absolutely nothing at all. Talking about medicines, there were only. We, Cambodians, usually boiled medicinal herbs, you know, there were only these kinds of medicines. Talking about other kinds of medicines, there were none. Nobody checked your tummy, no one did. They would work until the baby was born.
- Q. Did the women have menstruation?
- A. We women, during that period of time, some of us anyway, did not menstruate for four or five months before they menstruated once, just a little bit. Well, it was like they needed nutrition, and they got thinner and thinner.
- Q. Was there any case when women died of missing menstruation?
- A. I didn't know about this case very much, you know. Talking about people dying of starvation, there were some deaths, of course.

- Q. If someone did not go to do the labor, will he or she receive any ration?
- A. If we didn't go to do the labor and if we were not sick, we did not get anything at all. Even when we were sick, they had to see that we were truly sick before they would give us any ration. If we were not sick, they would not give it to us.
- Q. In that period of time, what did they consider as a real sickness?
- A. During that period of time, sicknesses such as: fever, and toothache, but only when your mouth was swollen. They did not care if we were sick internally. They said that if you collapsed at the rice fields, they just carried you off. If you collapsed at the work sites, they volunteered to carry you. When somebody was sick, that person would have to be in a state which they could clearly see.
- Q. In that period of time, were there doctors to treat the patients in the hospitals?
- A. At the hospitals, there were no medicines. In some areas, the patients were critically ill, and well, some medical people did not write or read. They did not know how to use the Western medicines at all. They did not know how in the world to use those kinds of medicines. If there were those physician assistants who used to study in medical schools in the old government, then they would know about those kinds of medicines, and how to use them.
- Q. So then, at that time, there were some medicines left over from the Sangkum too, right?
- A. At that time, China gave the Khmer Rouge some aids, medicines. We got good medicines, plus those that were left over from Sangkum, so they got some good medicines. In a month, they would give us some medicines. The hospital was for the whole sub-district, it was not for the groups. When the patients were very ill, they were sent to the sub-district's hospital. If this hospital could not treat them, then they were sent to Battambang city. The main hospital was in Battambang City. When I lived in Battambang, I learned that, any good doctor, any critically ill patient would go to the Battambang hospital. As long as the patients lived in Battambang, they would live there, and all of them were sent to the Battambang hospital. During that period of time, the sub-district hospital had no facilities to treat us. If we should just have a fever, they would give us some medicines to take. Sometimes they gave us fever reducing medicines. The Cambodian folk doctors mixed them from trees' roots, and molded them into pills and we would get some of those. Those folk doctors made those medicines; well, the ones who were experienced in treating hemorrhoids, would mix the medicines from trees' roots, and the Khmer Rouge just asked them to go work at the hospitals. They Khmer Rouge had no medical graduate doctors. Later on, they did let these

doctors work at the hospitals. But some physicians were old people previously liberated who were sent to study, some of them did not read or write. So, when it concerned medicines, the indications, dosages, etc. were written in French, and the medicines' names were in French, written in French, therefore, they could not understand French. If the medical person happened to be an educated one, he/she would know how to use them. When he/she got the medicines, he/she knew how to use this medicine or that medicine. Whereas at the main hospital, where I used to stay once or twice, all the doctors were educated graduates. They knew how to use the medicines, they had stethoscopes. The Chinese walked around and monitored them closely. There was a Chinese and four or five Cambodians following him when they made rounds to see the patients. If the patients were very sick, they would give them an I.V. They gave them injections, using good medicines.

- Q. What kind of illnesses did the patients have for the Khmer Rouge to send to Battambang?
- A. They had to be as ill as they could be, just about near death, before they sent them over there. Sometimes, some patients died and no one knew that they had died. They did not know whether or not this patient had any parents. If the patient happened to be in a mobile unit, and if he/she was seriously ill, nobody will receive any news from him/her. His/her parents would not know whether or not he/she were alive or dead. Only when the parents saw the son or daughter could they say: Oh, you are still alive. When they received no news about him/her then he/she was dead.
- Q. During that period of time, were there vaccinations against different kinds of diseases?
- A. I mean to say that there was nothing at all; at that time, there were no vaccinations like during the previous government. Sometimes, some patients were ill and died at the hospital. They were not able to send them there on time. They died at the hospital just like that. Some people were starving. When they were critically ill, they were sent to the hospital. They would ask hospital personnel to eat one mouthful of rice, and they got one mouthful of rice. For example, the workers where I worked, those who worked at the factories they did not get out of the hospital, out of the work site. When the Khmer Rouge sent them to Thippadei mountain, all the men were dead. Among 100 men, only one man survived and came back. I mean to say that when those people went there, their wives were all widows. They could not even step over the rice field dikes. They had to crawl over them.
- Q. What did they have to do at the Thippadei mountain?



- A. To do the farming. When the Khmer Rouge sent them to Thippadei mountain, it was like they sent them to die. It was impossible to farm around that area. Sending people there was like sending people to die. As for the women, many of them were still alive. Some of them have some children who died, or their husbands died. Most of them have their husbands and their children who died. They were separated from their children and grandchildren. No one was living together with the members of his/her family. When they came home, they did later than other people. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodian, I went back to my home village, and after I have gone inside the city and lived there for one month, I saw these men come in. The Vietnamese soldiers attacked gradually, then these men came in. Some of them were pushed to the "Phnom Traceak Cet."
- Q. Why did more men die than women?
- A. Well, it was like, they didn't give enough ration to them. Besides, the Khmer Rouge made them work very hard, so they . . . . The rations to men and women were the same amount. In my opinion, men need more food than women do. Men needed more energy than women did. Just think about it, they made these men plow the fields, work on the ground, just like us, and how could they be strong? They did not get nutrition, and they lasted at the most for two years after which time they were very weak. At the Thippadei mountain work site, they gave rations of a very watery porridge, and sometimes, they didn't even have porridge, they only had bran. Those men were reduced to such a state, where could they find any food?
- Q. Have you gone to do some labor at the Thippadei mountain? Did you have any relatives who did?
- A. A co-worker, who used to work with me went there, and when she came back and saw me, she cried and hugged me, because all her children had died.
- Q. During that period of time, what religious faith were the population allowed to have? Were there pagoda's then?
- A. In the Communist regime, there were no merit, no religious ceremonies, no temples, no monks, nothing. In 1975, right after we were all evacuated all the monks were disrobed. There were some monks who were elderly and who refused to be disrobed. At the end of 1975, the Khmer Rouge irradiated all the pagodas and did not allow them to be used for religious ceremonies. There were no more pagodas. I met an old man who used to live near me in the old government. I asked him: "grandpa, have you seen Venerable chief monk? Where did he go to?" The old man cried, and told me: "They took three monks to go greet Prince Sihanouk: chief monk at Pothiveal pagoda, his assistant, and

secretary." The old man cried and said that he asked the Khmer Rouge to go along with them too. The old man who asked to accompany the three monks was Ngaam. They did not let him go. He said: "If I had to die, I would like to die with the monks. They did not let go. They only let the three monks go, and they disappeared ever since. They took them to be killed." In 1975, there was a man who is still alive and lives in Chicago. He was major. He was also taken to go "greet" Prince Sihanouk. The Khmer Rouge rounded out the lieutenants first. They sent the majors first to the Thippadei mountain, if we talk about sending people to that place. Next came the captains, then the first lieutenants, then the warrant officers. He was the one who could escape. He said that, as soon as the people who went to greet the prince got off the truck, the Khmer Rouge pointed the guns at them, and they were gone, all of them; they just shot them all. At the time, realizing what has happened, he pretended to fall down. He said that, at the time, the grass was tall up to here. He pretended to fall down so that he would be able to roll himself over. He said that he only wore a pair of shorts. He took off his other clothes. He was crawling across a pool of blood covering the ground. He wiped off his blood stained body. They walked around and checked the victims in the grass. If some happened to be still alive, they would finish them off. They did not spare anybody. They shot people dead, just like that. They took the people away and killed all of them. He tried hard to flee and got to a village. The villagers said: "Don't stay around here. If you stay here, you will die; it does not look good. The Khmer Rouge were looking for people like yourself." The villagers felt sorry for him, so they made him change his clothes. They gave him a set of clothes to wear. He tried very hard to walk until he reached Phnom Krapeu where his family lived. Well, his wife was . . . they only made the husbands go to greet the Prince. They had the wives go to different work sites or cooperatives to do some labors, and work in the rice fields. He went to live at that place. He had a daughter. When he got home, he met with his wife and daughter and he pretended to be crazy. He said that, at the time, every time he saw anybody at all, he felt like crying. He did not dare say anything at all. He pretended to be a crazy man, and was kind of a lunatic. When people talked about something, he just did the opposite thing. When people talked about something, he just did the opposite thing, when people said go to the West, he went East, vice versa. He pretended to be crazy. He said that if he had not pretended to be insane like this, he was afraid he might get killed in the Phnom Krapeu mountain. As a result, the Khmer Rouge did not have him do any labor. They knew that he was crazy, so they made him grow some vegetables to be put in the cooperative, or to be the cook's aid, taking care of drawing water, or replenish firewood, just anything that they wanted him to do. He was one of the soldiers. He came to the U.S. too.

- Q. When was the year that the Khmer Rouge made people go to greet the prince?
- A. It was in 1975, about seven days after the evacuation well, it was like, this, they

evacuated all the people and seven days later, they took the people who went to greet the Prince away to be killed.

Q. What did the Communists do to have initiated this rumor about going to greet the Prince, and then those people who did go turned out to be all dead? Please talk about this in details.

A. First, they divided the people into groups, and they called up their names to get into the truck. They then went to these designated places. Some people were just pedicab drivers, but they wanted to get a high post so they went to greet the Prince. The Colonels got in the trucks too. First, they told us that those officials who had a high position were asked to go greet the Prince. They divided these people into groups. At that time, my younger brother . . . well, it was like, there were many soldiers, therefore they had to divide them into groups; for example, they made some of them get into let's say five cars first, and they would leave. Those who went to Ta Kriem district were able to survive; many of them have survived. These people in Ta Kriem, and Au Pong Moan survived. I am talking about those people who went to this place. Some other people went to Tuol Meteh, beyond the way to Au Ta Kee, you know; the area beyond this place is called Tuol Meteh. Those people who were taken there were killed. They were taken there to be shot to death. The Khmer Rouge made my group go thrash the rice seedlings at that place. They made us go there and pull up the rice seedlings. There, the whole rice field was scattered with human skulls. There was a kind of fatty substance floating in the field. Well, it was like there were so many corpses around. The people saw the rice seeds and left them there to grow so it would go up as tall as the flood level. When we pull up the seedlings, the stalks were slippery due to the fatty substance from the human remains. Seven days after the announcement, they took all these people away to be killed. But, in Au Pong Moan, there were many of those who survived. They took those people there just to work in the rice fields. They would kill some of them, and spare the others to work in the rice fields.

Q. Who were the people who were killed? And who were the people who worked in the rice fields?

A. They would ask who used to be soldiers. Those who raised their hands up and said that they were soldiers were taken to work in the rice fields. Those who had a high ranking position were put in a separate group. Usually, the high ranking officials were killed; for example, Mr. Tan Pok, as soon as they took control of the area, they took him away to be killed. They took him away and killed him, then took off his ring and watch and wore them too. They did this right in front of our eyes. Therefore, during that period of time, we could not let them know that we were educated. As a matter of fact, we had to pretend that we were

uneducated.

Q. Did you find out about these events through the rumors or did you see them happen with your own eyes?

A. I have not witnessed them at all, but the man who is living in Chicago told me about this, he spoke the truth. The year he met me, he pretended that he did not know me, or that he was aware of anything that went on at all. (talk no evil; see no evil; hear no evil). He pretended that he did not hear about anything, he pretended to be a moron. After the Vietnamese invasion, when he got to the Khao I Dang camp, he told me about it.

Q. Please talk about the pagodas and Buddhism in that period of time in details?

A. During that period of time, whoever recited Buddhist scriptures, the *Dharmas*, would be taken away to be killed. In late 1975, they eradicated the pagodas; the Khmer Rouge disrobed all the monks. Those monks who refused to be disrobed would be killed. Well, there were no pagodas, nothing at all. They killed those people; they did not allow us to recite prayers. By 1977, the Khmer Rouge carried all the big Buddha statues to dispose them off. They threw away all those statues which were light enough for them to carry. In the old days, we Cambodians, we built Buddha statues in silver and gold. Well, they put these statues in one warehouse. It was full of gold and silver. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, some people took Buddha's head, some took the statue's hands, legs, etc. . . . Some statues were made from bronze, some were small, and some were old. Talking about all those big Buddha statues, when I lived in Au Ta Kee in 1975-76, they called my husband to help them carry these statues and throw them away. But that night, my husband overslept; that night, I guess he overslept, or whatever happened, they did not call him. In the morning, we were surprised to see the statues in the lotus pond where we used to draw water to drink all the time. We saw them there. They threw them there.

Q. Have you yourself ever prayed and recited Buddhist scriptures secretly?

A. During that period of time, I only prayed in my heart and mind. I have not done anything. If we wanted to live, we should do it in our mind.

Q. Did they celebrate the *Phcum Ben* ceremony?

A. During the *Phcum Ben* ceremony, we were allowed to have one day off, a day of rest. All they did was make rice cakes and distributed one to everyone of us to take home. This was what they did when we were eating collectively. During that period of time, they did not even allow us to have prayer books. They burned all

of them. They gathered these books and burned all of them. As for the novels, and the picture books, they burned and destroyed all of them. They tore them up and used the pages to role up their cigarettes. They did not spare any book at all.

Q. Did the Communists have any religion?

A. They had no religion at all. The only religion for them was a religion of hacking, stabbing, and killing.

Q. What did they teach you about Communism?

A. I have not heard them teach us about it. They just wanted us to work as hard as we could possibly do it, to push ourselves very hard with the labor to abolish all the enemies.

Q. Whom did they label as the enemy?

A. The enemy was, well, when you were chronically ill, you were an enemy. When they told you to do some labor and you refused, you were an enemy too; for example, when we said- oh, it is such a hardship to do the labor, the dumb communism, so on, so forth, and when we said Pol Pot regime was so and so. At night, when we complained or talked, we would be taken away to be killed. They would not spare us at all. This meant that, whatever it was, everything was an enemy, even stealing was an enemy act. They killed many people.

Q. What did they educate people beside this?

A. They educated us about pushing ourselves all out to do the labor. They said that when they fought the war, they were empty handed, and they got to the point where they got many weapons, then the victory. They always educated us about work.

Q. What did they call morals code? What did they educate you about the moral code?

A. They educated us that: we were married, and we could not take another spouse. In my opinion, I like the way they educated us about the morals code very much. All of us like it very much. When we were married, we could not take another spouse or, a married woman could not take a lover. So, married people could not take a lover. In my opinion, in my mind, if we talk about this matter, the society in which we are living now looks like this, so then, it is good in a way.

Q. Why do you think that this theory is good?

- A. I think that, if we are already settled with a family why then should we want to have another lover? I think that their idea is good. If this is their theory, then I agree with them; concerning this matter, I agree. If we were to be a widow, or a widower, then, if we wanted to get married again, then there would be no problem. If we had a wife or a husband, if we don't want to live together, then we should get a divorce.
- Q. During that period of time, were you able to have a rift and get a divorce?
- A. At that time, there was no divorce case. If we divorced each other then, the men was not allowed to take another wife, and the women could not take another husband either. They did not allow them to practice this habit. If we had a quarrel, then they would summon us to give us some counseling. They did not want us to have a quarrel with one another. We had to get along; sometimes, they even monitored us.
- Q. If everyone was so busy with the labor, and had little time to see each other, how could those men and women take a lover or a boyfriend or girlfriend? During that period of time, were there still people who had lovers?
- A. Yes there were. The Khmer Rouge took them away to be killed, you know. But, this only happened among those people who had enough food to eat, for instance, the unit's chiefs who had enough food to eat, enough rice to eat. They cooked rice behind our backs, and we would not know about it, because we were gone to work. The people who were just plain citizens who had nothing, could not commit adultery, no way. They had no energy, you see. Every time we saw each other's face, we had enough; no one had any energy, any strength at all.
- Q. So then, this meant that men and women could not have love for one another, is this true?
- A. If we were single persons, we could speak to one another, and we were able to say: "I love you." If the girls agreed to marry the boys, then the Khmer Rouge would marry us off, they would not object to it. They married us off for us.
- Q. Nobody was ever able to express love and tender loving care for one another then, is this true?
- A. It did not seem to be that way at all, no. Everybody did such a hard labor, therefore, they were exhausted. If we had children, then we were so tired because we took care of them too that as soon as we got back to our huts, we hit the sack; we could hardly find our own sleeping mats. Sometimes, we would go to sleep with our muddy feet. As soon as we got to our huts, we fell asleep because we

were exhausted.

- Q. Did the Khmer Rouge permit two women to hug each other or hold hands?
- A. During that period of time, the relationship between a woman and another woman was not condemned. They were allowed to walk holding hands. They did not forbid this behavior. The women could also walk and wrap their hands around one another's shoulders, because they were of the same sex, as long as they were not of the opposite sex, a man and woman.
- Q. During that period of time, was there mutual assistance among the people?
- A. The people who were neighbors helped one another. For example, should we get sick, there was someone who would "*Kaoh Khyal*" for us, achieved by rubbing a coin on the body, arms and neck by using oil for lubrication. It is believed to relieve the uncomfortable feeling experienced when having a cold or flu. As for food, we had no time to share with one another. We could not even find anything to give to one another. We had just enough for ourselves.
- Q. Which relationship was proved to be more intimate: women with women or men with men?
- A. There was none. I don't believe that I have witnessed any kind of relationship described. If there was such relationship, it would be minimal. For example, if the Khmer Rouge rationed something to us, we would receive equal amount. As a result, if we had many things, we were able to give to one another. There was no problem then. If something happened, we had to monitor that, and they would have to separate us. They did not want us to have such a close relationship with one another. I am talking about those who had problems with one another. If no problem arose between them, then it would be alright. I don't know very much about this kind of friendship during their era. The friendship usually developed between single people who were close to one another. But, for the married people such as my group, it was just the normal way of life.
- Q. How did the Khmer Rouge control the population?
- A. During that period of time, they controlled the people by making everybody get up early in the morning to do a labor. The unit's chiefs went to the rice fields before everybody else did. If someone was late to the worksite, they would summon him/her and warned him/her by saying: "you have been late for this much time, etc. If they wanted us to go down to the rice fields, they wanted us to go down simultaneously with the other workers. Some other men, such as the unit's chiefs, only had to go make rounds and monitor us, just got in the water in the rice fields

and got a splash, then went up the banks and disappeared. In some villages, those of us who were afraid of leeches were taken away to be killed. But, at that time, I was afraid of leeches myself. I just went into the water, and I would yell, but in my area, they did not take us away and kill us. We would cry and we still cried, and those who were not afraid of leeches would just pull them off for us. We would then continue to plow the fields, and plant rice seedlings as usual.

Q. Where did the unit chiefs disappear to?

A. Whenever, they disappeared, they went to the dining hall sometimes; they always had enough to eat; as for us, how could we have enough to eat when we always did the labor.

Q. How did they torture or mistreat the people? What kind of people were tortured or mistreated? What were the kind of offenses that were punishable?

A. Some people were accused of being . . . as long as they could see that these people had a fair skin, they were being accused of being Vietnamese, and were taken away to be killed. This happened in 1977. As long as they saw that some people had a fair skin, it was enough ground for the Khmer Rouge to kill them. In the villages, some people tried very hard to hide their names and backgrounds, and they had to change their names. I changed my name; my name was not the name I have now. It was a different name. I registered myself with another age too. I also changed the name of my hometown besides this, unless the person who registered me had known me previously he would have not known that I have done so. Even between the people who knew one another previously, they would rarely act as though they have know one another before. In that era, it was not wise to know too many people. The Khmer Rouge would monitor us, got the evidence, and kill us. They did no convict the children too much since they were still young. Usually they would just send them to a faraway place and subject them to hard labor. But, in some instances, they would also kill them too, because they would steal too much. They steal food. Well, they did not have enough to eat and they got hungry. During Pol Pot regime, even those of us who never stole anything in our life would know how to steal. We were even afraid to eat the vegetables and fruits which we grew ourselves. We did not dare pick them. We did not steal any things other than just foods. Well, they did not allow us to eat the fruits and vegetable which we grew ourselves. When we wanted to pick some fruit or vegetable, we had to do it in secret so that they would not see it. Those who were being tied and taken to be killed were those who were left behind. For example, among the married couples . . . the husbands were gone to do the labor far away from home. The wives stayed around near by their huts and worked in the villages. They were not aware that their husbands had fled. Some of these men managed to flee to Thailand. Around 1975-76, the workers at the factory



where I worked were able to flee, you know? Some of them even escaped and made their way to France. The relatives of those people who escaped and made their way to France. The relatives of those people who escaped were left behind and were condemned. They were taken away to be tortured; some were alive and others were dead. They stood guard and forbid us to move around, to get in touch with anybody. They built the halls all around. They were meant to keep us inside the perimeter. They made us do the farming, working the ground and digging it. They made us sleep on the ground, and stripped us of our belongings so that we would have nothing. Our clothes were torn to shreds. At meal time, they did something like . . . it was like for the pigs. They would push the dish to us, gave you watery porridge, they hit us and interrogated us and wanted us to give an answer. Some people put the blame on other people, and they would die one after another. This is to show you that it was very difficult, very hard then. They hit us and tortured us. Sometimes we would go to work, and they would hit us because our name was on the list at the worksite for making an offense.

- Q. Did you know the people who fled during that period of time?
- A. The person lived around the area near my village. When he fled, they took his wife away, they even took his children away too. They took all of them to be killed.
- Q. Did they take the people away to be killed everyday or once in awhile in your village?
- A. Around my village, they only took those who committed an offense to be killed. They did this everyday, but then, I am very sure about that. As far as I can see, it was only once in awhile. There was no communication between the villages. Sometimes, when everything seemed to be alright, we heard that someone has been taken away to be killed already.
- Q. Did they ever torture you or threaten to kill you?
- A. I don't know about their plan to kill me, but when they mistreated us and made us work, I would work just like we were told to. When my husband and I were living together, they took him away, and I fled to my mother's hut. I fled there, and I changed my name and my last name into the new ones.
- Q. Was this killing a measure to control the people at that time, and to subject the people to fear and obeying them?
- A. They did this so that we will not talk any more, or so we would not see this as their plan to kill the people. They wanted us to see that the person was an enemy;

for example, they would call up a meeting, and they raised the issue of the person being an enemy.

Q. We have heard that the Communists never killed the people in front of population. They killed them illicitly. What do you think it?

A. I don't know what to think about it. In 1978, in the area where my mother lived, they killed the victims in front of the people. The persons violated the morals code. They killed both of them at once. They killed them in front of the people. As soon as they finished discussing the case, they hit them with a club, bang, bang, and they were dead. Later on, some people committed the same offense, and the population asked them not to kill them right in front of them anymore.

Q. What were the reasons that they kill the people in secret?

A. I really don't know the reason behind their secret killings. They usually took the people to be killed at night. Sometimes, they would go and call these people while they were asleep. They took them away and killed them. Sometimes the people who returned to their village from work heard some screams. They killed the people nearby the village not far away at all. Sometimes, we were so exhausted that we went to sleep, and we did not know that they had killed some people at all. They buried the bodies, and they did not even cover the bodies completely. Nobody dared to go near the place at all. If we went near by the place, we would be labeled an enemy.

Q. Have you heard about or seen women being raped?

A. I have not heard about or seen this account.

Q. Between men and women, who worked the most, who did the hardest labor, and who were the most exhausted?

A. Talking about our way of living, for the married couples with children, we worked according to our strength, either going far away or nearby. About working, the women would dig the ground, and the men did the same thing. For the young men, they dug the ground, and the young ladies dug the ground too. It was equal work. They always measure up the ground in meters for them. Well, talking about measuring the ground, oh, I saw the ground around Kampong Puoy area, the district is like this, and I looked at the dirt, I could see that they took the people there to carry the dirt and they would die. Only those women with small children were able to have lighter work. They could do some work near their huts and before they knew it they could see their children. As for those who had grown children, they went to work far away. When they worked, they always had to

sleep on the roads. They only returned home to sleep after one month time. Sometimes, their clothes were torn to shreds. When the Khmer Rouge saw that the clothes were torn, they checked to see if they were completely torn before they allowed them to sit down and mended them. They were given one day to mend the clothes. As for the foods, they were all the same. There were no good nor bad foods. For example, they would make sour soup in the boy's unit, and another kind of soup in the girls' unit. They gave equal amount of meat and fish to these units.

Q. How do you feel about all of the actions done by the Communists to the people?

A. I can not find any reason, and I don't know why they did what they did. Was it because they wanted to kill all of us and not spare a single person?

Q. Why would they want to kill the whole population like that?

A. Oh, yes, around the middle of 1978, just before the Vietnamese invaded our country, they had the artisans make the handcuffs, there were thousands of handcuffs alone. After the Vietnamese invasion, those artisans who made the handcuffs told us that the Khmer Rouge had them make thousands of handcuffs. We don't know why they made so many handcuffs, we did not dare ask them. But, I would think that they made tens of thousands of handcuffs for one reason only, to kill all of us. You know, in each sub-district, the handcuffs were made right there. After they were made, they were stored there for the use in that area. So I said that, in that case, they would kill all of us.

Q. What kind of people did they kill?

A. They took away all the educated people and killed them. It would be better off for us to pretend that we were not educated, we did not anything at all, and that I have not heard about anything at all. This mean might spare our life. Those of us who were not especially destined to die, wherever we went to, there were people who had compassion for us and would help us. For example, my younger sister, if it had not been for the medical team, and the women who were previously liberated prior to April 17, 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took control, she would have been killed. She did not write or read much, but these women felt sorry for her, and hid her identity. They had many stories that happened to her.

Q. Why do you believe that they tried to hide these stories for her?

A. I always thought about it in my mind. Everyday, I would pray to Buddha. I did not know when I would die. I don't know why they tried to hide things to protect my sister. For my family, it seemed that there were people who had compassion

for us. The Khmer Rouge did not find any offense to take away and kill us. My family adhered to Buddha's principles. We went to the pagoda everyday. We never killed any animals. Ever since the day my family was formed, we never decapitated the chickens. We never killed any animal at all. We never raised the chickens, and then decapitated them. We would wait until they died naturally, we never decapitated them at all.

Q. So then, you think that your family's good deeds prompted the people to have compassion for you, is this right or not?

A. That was what I thought. In my opinion, it was because we did good deeds so that we would live peacefully.

Q. Did the Communists want to try to teach the people Communism, or did they want to kill them one by one like that?

A. They killed them one by one successively, but talking about those who . . . I don't know anything about it. I never knew anything about this.

Q. So then, you thought that, you and your children would be killed, right?

A. Yes, I did. That was what I thought. If they made the handcuffs, then what could happen? I don't really know. The man said that the Khmer Rouge had four men make the handcuffs. Among these four men, he was the only one who escaped. They took the other three and killed them. After they made the handcuffs, they were taken away to be killed. He could escape.

Q. Were there women who worked for the Communists?

A. There were men and women, but the majority of them were men. There were more men than women, there were less women.

Q. Between the men and women, who were the most vicious?

A. The women were vicious too, but out of ten, there were only one or two vicious women. More men were vicious than women were. I also heard that they ate human livers. I saw the man who was reported to have eaten human livers. His eyes were not normal like ours. His were blood shot at the time I saw his eyes, they were blood shot. When he talked, I looked and saw them, and I was frightened. I didn't even dare look at this kind of person's face.

Q. Was the person who ate people's livers a man or a woman?

A. Most of them were men, not women.

Q. When you lived in Pol Pot's regime, have you heard about people eating human livers?

A. What do you mean by hearing about them? I saw another man. He was militia spy in the village. He saw me and he called to me saying: "Lady friend, where are you going?" This was what he said to me. I said that I was going to the worksite. This was all that he said, and as soon as I saw his eyes I was frightened, and I felt like running.

Q. Do you know how your husband died?

A. I don't know how he died, but when they took him away, they said that he was going to their bamboo trees.

Q. What kind of religious ceremonies did you have for dead members of your family?

A. According to the Cambodian custom, they washed the deceased. They would put the coffin in a basket. It would be a coffin for seven days. If my father died in the old government, they would have found I made for the funeral. There would be a wife and the children, and they would have some people to conduct a religious ceremony to convey the spirit to the land where people received the scriptures, *Parikha*, to keep the corpse from rotting. They had some traditional funeral music played while the coffin was kept in the pagoda before the burial, other kind of music during the ceremony. At night people recited the Poch scriptural, the papers in Buddhist, and other scriptures in the funeral. If the relatives had a lot of money, they would keep the body for two or three days, and they would recite those scriptures. If they did not have a lot of money, they put the *Parikha* on top to keep the body. After that, there were the traditional drum playing and the *Arka* chanting by traditional group by the pagoda all night until the evening, that is, the whole night through until the day was according to the Cambodian custom, when the Cambodian custom a *Parikha* if they are the relatives, they would wear all white clothes. They also wore white scarves to cover their heads. The other guests who go to the funeral would wear black pants or skirts and white shirts or blouses. Other also they can also wear all black clothes. The majority of the bodies were cremated. They would invite two monks and an *Arka* to accompany the body in the funeral procession from home to the pagoda. In Cambodia, there were cases to carry the coffin. Some people would take the coffin into the shape of a *Phungo*, which others would put them into a narrow

## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 5

- Q. How many members of your family have you lost in Pol Pot regime?
- A. In that regime, first I was separated from my father. He went to Phnom Penh before the Khmer Rouge's invaded the city. After he left home, I did not know where he had gone to, whether or not he was alive. Second, in 1977, he was separated from my younger sister. My sister died. She died while doing the labor, they did not take her away to be killed. She went to work and was hit by the lightning and died. She was 22 years old. As for my husband, they took him away to be killed at the end of 1976.
- Q. Do you know how your husband died?
- A. I don't know how he died, but when they took him away, they said that he was going to clear bamboo trees.
- Q. What kind of religious ceremonies did you have for these members of your family?
- A. According to the Cambodian customs, they ordained the deceased's son so he could lead the coffin in the procession. He would be a monk for seven days. If my father died in the old government, they would have funeral music for the funeral. There would be a wise man, the *Acha*, to recite the scriptures, some monks to conduct a religious ceremony to convey the merits to the dead, other monks recited the scriptures, *Pathdom*, to keep the corpse company. . . . There was also a traditional funeral music playing while the coffin was kept at the pagoda before the burial, other kind of music during the procession. At night, people recited the *Pada* scriptures, the prayers to Buddha, and other scriptures for the funeral. If the relatives had a lot of money, they would keep the body for two or three days, and they would recite these scriptures. If they did not have a lot of money, they put the *Parort* on ice to keep the body. At night, there was the traditional funeral music and the *Acha* standing by to stand guard by the corpse all night until the morning, that is, the whole night through until the day time. According to the Cambodian custom, when the Cambodians mourn a death, if they are the relatives, they would wear all white clothes. They also wore white scarves to cover their heads. The other guests who go to the funeral would wear black pants or skirts and white shirts or blouses. Otherwise, they can also wear all black clothes. The majority of the bodies were cremated. They would invite four monks and an *Acha* to accompany the body in the funeral procession from home to the pagoda. In Cambodia, there were carts to carry the coffins. Some people made the carts into the shape of a *Hangsa*, while others made them into a *sampan*

to carry the coffins. When the relatives have money, they would hire a funeral band to accompany the funeral procession according to our custom. The Cambodian people have the custom to throw the pop rice, the *hic*. The *hic* is made from rice. They put it in a bowl and some coins, and throw them as the funeral procession is in progress as charity. Whoever picks up the coins can keep them since it is meant to be a charity. There is only one person to throw the *hic*. If the deceased is the father, then the first born is to throw the *hic*. If the first born cannot go to the funeral, then the second child will do it; they usually pick the daughter to throw the *hic*. They assigned the son to be the ordained monk to precede the fire, *buoh muk phleung*. The *hic* thrower holds the *phtel*. The *Acha* tells her to recite the scriptures while walking in the procession. She throws the *hic* along the way until the procession gets to the *pachha*, the cremation place. There are four monks on the carts bearing the body. If the *buoh muk phleung* monk were a man, he would sit in front of the coffin. The person who is *buoh muk phleung* monk is *Nen*, a young monk, and he is *Nen* for seven days. During the entire seven days, this young monk, does not eat the evening meal. They have set up a limit for him to mourn for three months and ten days. If he wants to mourn for one year it is all right too. The mourners do not put powder makeup or use any other makeup products at all. They do not go out, or have fun at all. If they work, they can go out to work. If a person dies, the guests who go the funeral must wear black pants or skirts, and white shirts or blouses. The deceased's relatives wear black pants or skirts and white shirts or blouses, and they must wear a black band around the shirts or the blouses sleeves, or else they can wear a piece of black cloth in the front of their shirts or blouses as a mourning sign. During this period of time, the relatives cry and are bereaved because of this loss. If the family has money, then relatives can hold a religious ceremony after the person died for one week, another time one hundred days afterwards, and another time one year later. For example, a person died on a Saturday. The following year on Saturday at the same time in the same month, the family would hold another religious ceremony. In the ceremony, the family would have portable stove, pots and pans, rice, salt, fish sauce and everything, and they offer them to the monks. They hold this ceremony one year later. This ceremony was held according to the family's means. They invited the monks for meals as usual to convey the merits to the deceased. If they have some belongings, they can also give them away to charity also to convey merits to the departed. For example, when a person just passes away, the family would donate his/her clothes to other people for charity, so that this merit would be conveyed to the departed, in another world. We, Cambodians, believe that when we donated things such as clothes, money or foods to other people, the deceased person will receive them. We have to offer the provisions to the monks who will then recite special scriptures to convey the merits to the deceased. It was like to pray and convey the merits to those who have departed so that they won't have any sins, and to start another life in another re-incarnation and having a good life.

Q. During Pol Pot regime, what kind of ceremonies did you hold for your husband and younger sister?

A. There was nobody who was able to mourn the deceased during Pol Pot regime. But, we mourned them in our heart. We cried at night. For example, when we cried, we had to cry in secret, so no one could see us. If the person died of an illness, we were able to cry in front of everybody when it was buried. If the person was dead because he/she was executed, we were not allowed to cry. We were only able to mourn and be sad in our heart, that was all. In 1977, when my sister died during that period of time, they did cover her body with a white sheet of cloth. My mother was bereaved. They sent someone to go inform my mother and take her to see my sister. I was living far away from there at the time. She took a motorized pedal cab. When she got there, the people covered a white sheet of cloth over my sister's body. They did not hold any religious ceremony for her. They disposed of the body in a very decent manner. My mother mourned her death for one year.

Q. Did they put the body in a coffin?

A. Yes, at that time, they did make a coffin for her because she died while performing her job, and she was struck by lightning. This depended on the regions. In some areas, they only rolled the body in a sitting mat. They had no coffin to put the body in.

Q. Did they allow the family to bury the body?

A. Yes, they let the family and the mother go and see her. They did not allow anybody outside of the family circle to go see her body. I am talking about my sub-district. In some sub-districts, the patients were hospitalized and died at the hospital without anyone knowing that they had died. If someone died, they would call the family to inform about the death. For the married couples, if one spouse died, they just told the other one that the husband had died, or the wife had died. Some members of the family lived quite a distance away and could not make it. If a man died, they would take him away to be buried by only rolling his body in a sitting mat, and they would go and tell his wife that her husband had died.

If a person died of an illness or in the line of labor, they allowed us to mourn him/her or to cry. They allowed us to take one day off work. If the person died of being executed by the Khmer Rouge, he was accused of being a traitor to their party, and they said that we had not time to cry. We would not even know that they had taken the body away. We were not allowed to mourn the deceased. We did not dare to talk about our grief.



Q. At the present time, if someone in your family died, what would you do?

A. Right now, if someone in my family dies, I will mourn the person, the same way we did in the Sangkum era. We have monks too right now. If we have a lot of money, we would keep the body for three days, I would hold a religious ceremony and invite the monks to have meals and recite the funeral scriptures, the *Bangsekoul* as usual. If I was allowed to stay home, I would be able to stand vigil the while nights through. But at the present time, in this country, we have to rent a funeral home. We are able to go to the funeral home and hold the *Bangsekoul* ceremony there. We can also go to see the body there, and we can have the *Acha* go there and recite the scriptures as usual. If my brothers or sisters die, I must have the *Acha* recite the *Pathoam* the special kind of scripture recited when a person dies.

Q. Do people recite the *Pathoam* during the funeral ceremony here?

A. Old man Phin's son died in a car accident. He rented a church near his house and he held a religious ceremony for his son. He kept the body there from Thursday till Saturday. At night, he invited four monks to hold the *Bangsekoul*. It was not as complete as a funeral ceremony in Cambodia would be. In Cambodia, the people would have the *Acha* to recite the *Pathoam* at the house for the whole time the body was at the house or pagoda. In the US, we do not have the *Acha* to recite it all the time, because some *Achas* have to go to work, and they cannot help us. They can only sit and recite it for awhile.

Q. If the members of your family die, what kind of funeral ceremony do you intend to have?

A. If someone dies in my family, I would mourn the person according to our custom, my own way. Seven days after the person died, I would hold a religious ceremony for the deceased one time, one more time after 100 days, and another time after one year. This is my idea of a funeral. I think that if I can mourn the person for three years then I would do it. If I cannot do this, then I would only mourn him/her for one year only.

Q. What are the procedures for mourning a deceased person for one or three years?

A. When we mourn a person for three years, we would wear black pants or skirts and a white shirt or blouse and a black band as a symbol, just like we were in Cambodia. For instance, if my mother dies, I would beg her for a pardon for whatever the wrong doings I may have done to her. When my mother dies, I must shave my head, wear white skirt and blouse and morn her for seven days. After seven days, I wear black skirts and white blouse for the mourning.

- Q. When you came here, have you ever held any religious ceremony to convey the merits to your father and husband who have departed?
- A. When I lived here, I have held some religious ceremonies too. Sometimes, I went to the pagoda and held the ceremony there. So that I did not have to hold them at home. Sometimes, the family would get together and hold the ceremonies at the pagoda. When I when to Washington, DC, I went to the pagoda and held a three-day religious ceremony. I meditated, listened to the monks read the Buddhist sermons. It was like I have done the complete cycle of the required ceremony. Every time I hold a religious ceremony, I bought provisions from the pots and pans to the dishes, the blankets, the mats, the pillows, soy sauces, fish sauces, salt, clear noodle threads, rice noodles which are dry goods.
- Q. What kind of belief do you have on this kind of ceremony?
- A. I believe that if I hold some ceremonies such as giving charity to other people, I will get the merits sooner or later in the after life, after I die. I will not be able to see whatever will happen to me. Especially, well, we have to do good deeds and the good deeds will provide us with good merits. Therefore, I would venture to say that it is better to do good deeds than to do vices.
- Q. You said that you used to do meditations, Sister. What do these meditations mean? What do you do meditations?
- A. We do the meditation when everything's quiet. We have the candle light; the light should not be too bright. We would sit in the temple. It is up to us to sit, whether it is for a half an hour or one hour, it is up to our tolerance. When I did the meditations, I sat for more than two hours. I sat right in the front portion of the temple. I lit up the joss sticks and prayed to Buddha. I recited the prayers to Buddha three times; than I recited Buddha's scriptures; I would answer *Sokkatao*, and *Sokkatao*, it is called . . . . It is a kind of scripture a *Dharma* which Buddha gave a name . . . I don't really know what to say on the *Dharma* subject matter. In my mind, I recited *Sokkatao Dharma*, I breathed out, and breathed in, out and in, and I would sit comfortably and straight. While meditating, we must concentrate and we should concentrate on *Dharma* Buddha's principles; we should not think about anything else, about the left or the right. We should have total concentration. When I meditated, sometimes I did not hear anything at all. I did not even notice my neighbor who went to the bathroom near me. I have meditated and seen things. When I meditated, my mind was not altered. It was like my mind drifted further and further. Sometimes I saw myself flying up there. There were many stages. While I was at the pagoda in Washington, DC, I medicated for a period of two hours during the period of time that I went there and making a couple of trips. Even though I got there for two or three days, I had to sit for half

an hour or one hour to do the meditations. I did not want to interrupt them.

Q. What are the benefits of these meditations?

A. I think that sitting for meditations help us make our concentration good and our mind good and stable. It is like, well, I think that our mind is only thinking about doing good deeds, so that we. . . . This depends on our health. If we feel good, we can meditate, if we don't feel good, then we can sit and meditate according to our own normal endurance. Our own health, well, we're human beings, we only have our body.

Q. Did you do meditations very often?

A. Let's see, since the year . . . I went to DC once a year; some times I went there twice a year; whenever I went there, I would hold a religious ceremony. Whenever we hold religious ceremonies, we would have the monks. That pagoda was quiet. It was a good place for me to sit and meditate. Sometimes I went there for three days. Sometimes it was a holiday like Christmas holidays. The night that I got there, I did not get to do the meditations. The next day, I did the meditations. I held a religious ceremony and the monks recited the *Dharma*. I was able to do the meditations late at night; it was quiet. The pagoda has a big lot of one square kilometer. There are also a Korean church and other churches, there are some houses behind it. The people who live in the houses are quiet people. The monks are also quiet. At night, the chief monk did some works. He has his own office. When I went there for three days, I would meditate for two days.

Q. Why did you go to the pagoda in Washington, DC, instead of the one in Rhode Island or the Lynn pagoda?

A. The reason I went to the pagoda in Washington, DC was because the monk had a project. Previously there was no real pagoda in Washington, DC. It was the same as the one in Rhode Island. The monk wanted to buy some land, to build a house a hall just like a pagoda in Cambodia. He did this to show the masterpiece of the soul of the Cambodian religion. I would like to see a pagoda built based on that thought because I donated some money in the ceremony there. I have my name inscribed at the pagoda. I helped pay for the land by burying a piece of it; for example, we can buy let us say either one meter, two meters or ten meters, depending on our generosity. I helped to buy that small piece of land and then I went to help the monks. I would like to know how useful that land and that pagoda are. Every time I went there every year, I always held a religious ceremony. I never missed one time yet. The reason that I always went to the pagoda in Washington, DC is that the monk has a good opinion. In Washington, DC all kinds of diplomats went to that pagoda. Important countries have their

churches or pagodas, such as the Korean temple . . . I mean to say that all the nationalities have their pagodas or churches there, you know, so then, well, they already had a pagoda or church there. Whenever they needed to interpret the Buddhist *Dharma* or the Bible and discussed them or debated among the different sects, they can do it. They would like to find out what the *Dharma* or psalms mean, how to apply them to everyday living situations. They interpreted them by conversation. There are all kinds of nationalities there, such as the Korean, Vietnamese, Indian monks. Because the monks in Washington, DC speak many languages, they speak English, Japanese, and Thai and they know many languages. So when they need to have a debate or conversation about the *Dharma* or the psalms (Bible), they are able to hold a meeting among the monks at the pagoda. Especially, the Cambodian monk wants to make the pagoda a religious soul, so that it would resemble the Cambodian pagodas. He does not want to make it into a house and divide it into several rooms. He wants to build the pagoda from scratch, build a new one. The reason I wanted to help the monk achieve his goals was to have the pagoda as a representative of the Cambodian people in Washington, DC. Any diplomat can go there and look at it. I have considered the monk's reasoning and I think that it is a good one. I also believe that we cannot build a pagoda similar to those in Cambodia in many places, because the capital is too much.

## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 6

Q. Sister, could you please talk about the loss in your family? What did you do to survive until today, despite the fact that you have gone through such a hardship?

A. From my past experience, first of all, whenever they held meetings, we must not be too loyal to the Organization. I thought that if we were loyal to it, we must die, we must not be educated. Finally, I had an experience I worked in a factory. They forced me to work at a factory again. When I went back to the factory, I changed my status to being a single woman, not having a husband, aged 24, and I did not have . . . . I wanted to go live in Sneung, and now I don't have a husband. I am 24 years old, and I am this old, and my name is . . . . I changed my name; I did not register my real name. My name at work was . . . when I went to live in Sneung, my registered my name as Khoeun. I had to resort to this kind of trick if I wanted to live. If I were too honest I would be dead. They would have to monitor me and they had to kill me. But, my life was lucky. It never seemed to . . . . It seemed like, when they saw me, they were paying attention to me. They asked about my sub-district. They did come by and asked a messenger to come and inquire, but the sub-district's chief said: "No, we do not have this name. We only have this name, but she is very fair." He told the messenger about my complexion and my characteristics, but so he said that my name was not like that one. Besides, that other lady was married. I was already married, so when I went there, I must inform the group's chief about my status, group's and unit's chief must be informed about everything. They must be informed about everything in the group. Afterwards, they would inform the sub-district's chief about me. The messenger said: "That young lady was already married, why do you say that she is not." So the sub-district's chief said: "We do not have this name this person. If you talk about this name then we don't have it." Well, this was my own personal story, I did not have any intention to cause trouble in my family. After some thinking, I thought that I was not able to live in Sneung any longer. I was afraid that I might run into more trouble. So they let us, like . . . . They picked your name by random to have us go to Au Ta Kee place. My name was picked, so I agreed to go would be very far away from the old place. I did not talk about my crossing all the dangers, the fear and the griefs in my heart. After I crossed all the dangers, I worried about my family, my mother, there came the time for me when I wanted to cross the border. I did not know what to do to get to the cross line border. At the time, my mother lived in Sneung. I lived in Au Ta Kee. In order to cross from a sub-district to another one, what should I do? They had guards to watch the border. They must look for a pass, and they would search us. But, before I went to Sneung, I have already told my group's chief that I like to go to Sneung. The group's chief said: "Go ahead and do what ever you can do, but as for the pass, I won't issue it to you at all. But in my own mind, I thought that I

had to write a fake pass. I did an experiment, I wrote the pass myself. When I got to Au Ta Kee they gave a ration to me. I thought if I were too honest I would be dead. If the situation required that I must be honest, then I walked in the right path. Wherever I must walk the crooked lanes, I would walk through them. But in Pol Pot regime, one must not show that he/she is educated. If you were educated and well informed, then they will inevitably take you away to be killed. All they had to do was to accuse you of being a soldier or a government worker, and they would take you away to be killed. This is the reason why I dare and risked all kinds of odds and dangers in the Pol Pot regime, meaning that I was not afraid of anything at all. I mean to say that I took a chance, if I were to die, then let it be. But, I would say that it was as if the merit's goodness helped me. Wherever I went I never was in any danger. It was like some people were in danger and wherever I went, I never was in any danger. When these people moved around, they met the guards. I never met the guards at all.

One day when I went to visit my mother, I went to look for her there. I must leave that place of residence because my husband was taken away to be killed for quite some time now. One day I had to spend the night on the road in my area. I issued my own pass and I was crossing the dangers. I made my own pass. I traveled half-way and got to Krapeu mountain. A man asked me: "Comrade, where are you going?" I said: "I am crossing to Sneung." It was night time when I passed by that area, you see. So he said: "Try to find a place to stay for now." At the time I did not know anybody at all. How did I dare to spend the night at that place I did not dare stay there. I rather spend the night in the middle of the forest. During all those years, I never knew anything about the wolves. Well, you know, like at night, the wolves howled, looking for fish or whatever. I never knew what they look liked, or knew anything about them, or heard them. When I heard them howl, I still did not know that they were indeed the wolves. It was not until the morning after that I realized it was the wolves because people told me about them. They said: "You sure are lucky, Sister, you came over here, there are many dangers here. You know, the wolves came here in packs." But it was like, due to my merit's goodness, it seemed that I was alright. The next morning I walked on and got to my mother's hut. I lived near my mother ever since then so that there won't be any further rift. That was my life. I was risking my life. If I were to die, well then I would take the risk so I would not be in such a hardship. When the whole family was moving around, let all of us die then.

Q. Did the Khmer Rouge abuse, molest your family any more than that?

A. Talking about mistreating, they did not mistreat my family. But, when the time was right, they just took the people away and killed them. They did it in such a way that we would not suspect it. They only said that they sent us to clear the forest, to cut the bamboo trees. They put four or five of them in a truck. When

they got to the designated area, they were all killed. The reason I said that they took him away, he wore a watch. When they returned, I saw my husband's watch on the killer's wrist. That was why I presumed that my husband was definitely dead.

Q. How did your mother and relatives take his death?

A. Well, my mother cried and mourned my husband's death every step she took, but she did not know what else she could do. She could not say whatever she wanted to say, and she could not utter any word either. She did not dare to discuss it with anybody. Everyone of us had to keep quiet to survive, because I told you that I crossed from one sub-district to another one, therefore, I tried my best to endure everything and be patient so I could survive to care for my one child who survives until now. My plight was . . . they did not criticize you, but they made us work, so we just endure the misery. We did not talk about anything this way, unless . . . . If we had sassed back or protested about many things, or else we would refuse to carry out their orders, then we will be taken away and be killed. As for me, whatever they had me do, I just complied. If they told us to go down to the fields and pulled the rice seedlings at a given time, or transplanted them, I would go down there at that given time just like everyone else. For this reason, well, some group's leaders kind of felt sorry for me, they usually did not make me go do the labor too far away and do hard labor; it seemed like they had . . . it was like my life was . . . I would go do the labor, but it seemed that there was somebody who would try to help me and prevented me from doing a hard labor, so that I won't suffer too much in the chapters of my life in Pol Pot regime.

Q. Did they ever starve you? Did you have enough food to eat?

A. There was not a moment when they starved me. As for the food, we did not have a great variety, but it was better than in most areas. It was like we did not have a lot of rice to eat, but even when we had porridge, it was thick. When we had things to eat, then we would have corns, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, water melon and cucumbers. That area has everything, it has fruits. Fruit trees and vegetables grow and yield crops.

Q. There is a proverb which goes: "Do not disregard crooked roads; do not walk along straight roads." What does this proverb mean?

A. This proverb means the very crooked roads are not good for us; as for the straight roads, when we are too straight too honest we will be dead.

Q. Living under Pol Pot regime, how was your experience with life? Was it full of sorrow and bitterness?

A. My life under Pol Pot's regime caused me great sorrow. My sorrow was unspeakable. It was like, well, I was not able to talk about it. When I wanted to cry, the tears would not come out. It was too much, it was such a plight for me.

Q. When you arrived in the United States, have you ever had nightmares which frightened you?

A. Every year, sometimes I would dream about a war in Cambodia, or crossing the border back into Cambodia, and I would see the Khmer Rouge torture the people. Sometimes, I saw them shoot at people's houses and cause them to catch fire. When I went to sleep at night, and woke up in the morning, frightened. I thought, where am I going? Sometimes, I dreamed that they shot me and broke my leg, or my arm. When I woke up, I was surprised and wondered: What about my leg break. I dreamed this dream every year. Sometimes, I dream this kind of dream once every three or four months. Sometimes I dreamed that my father came and told me: "Don't worry too much about daddy, just try to hold religious ceremonies so that you will gather merits to have a better life in the after life. You must take care of your mom." Sometimes, I dreamed that my husband came. When I thought about our memories, I was in sorrow. Sometimes, I would go to sleep at night at midnight or one in the morning. I was not able to go to sleep the whole night through till the morning. When I saw my father and husband in my dreams like this, sometimes I would lie down and cry on my pillows, all alone, nobody knew that I have cried, even when I got to my work place.

Q. How did you see your husband in your dream?

A. Sometimes I dreamed that he would come and tell me not to be too sorrowful. It seemed like he was already reincarnated into another person in another world. It was like he was saying something . . . . That was why at night when I talked to myself it was alright. I wanted to say something, but I could not, the words would not come out, and I felt disillusioned. For this reason, I would rather keep silent. Whenever I thought about the chapters of my life, and I thought about my life. This is why I said that it is better for me to live alone, because when and if I were to get married again, the second husband might mistreat my children, so then, I would not have any sorrow in my life, or any hardship.

Q. Do you feel that your dreams are true?

A. When I dreamed about my husband or father, I felt like we were living together; after awhile, then I realized that it was but only a dream. Why did I have such dreams? Was it because there were rifts in our life, or what could have happened to them? I was not able to sleep since then, and sometimes I dreamed about them every two or three months. Whenever I dreamed about them, I would cry and cry



every day. I tried not to think too much about them. It does not mean that I don't try to console myself. I thought: This is separation, and there is nothing I can do about it. I thought about Buddha's *Dharma*, and I reflected this way: There is life and there is death. Those who are still alive should build up the merits for the after life.

I thought about my family and my father during serious illness times. One day I was seriously ill. My father sat and cried, feeling dejected. He had such compassion and he felt sorry for me. When I was married, my husband took me to visit many places. Ever since I married my husband, he never gave me any problem or caused me any pain. I thought about my husband who never caused me any pain, never made me worry about anything. I had an easy time. But now, I am separated from my husband, father, and younger siblings. As for one of my younger sisters, she was also very good. Every time I told her to cook, she never made me worry about her not listening to me. When she died, I mourned her death. In Pol Pot regime, I mourned her death and I was miserable. I could not eat until I was extremely skinny. When I was sorrowful about my husband's death, I got thinner and thinner. I never said anything, I only got thinner and thinner. I had no energy, but I always went to do the labor until I got so ill that I fell with a thud at the rice fields and the people took me home. When I was not sick, I always went to do the labor so that I was able to care for my children. If I should die, my children will be orphaned. So, I tried to endure everything for the children's sake, for the family. There are still my mother, and my brothers and sisters who are young, there are many relatives still. I thought about my good deeds in the past, my good deeds for my father and he would do some good deeds for me. There were the memories which I have always recalled. Every time I thought about them, and when I dreamed about him like that I was unable to speak, I could only express my sorrow with my tears.

- Q. Do you recall all of these memories very often?
- A. Sometimes, I dreamed about them once every four or five months.
- Q. When you lived under Pol Pot's regime, what were the things you did to help your mind cope with the sorrow?
- A. During Pol Pot's regime, when we recited the *Dharma*, we even had to do it in our mind. We did not recite them so people could hear us. The Khmer Rouge did not subject us to such hard labor, like a harder labor than they would do themselves. Whatever kind of labor they did, we would do the same thing. But, we should have a good concentration, and would never fool around. I never sat near anybody when I worked. Even when we had a break, I would sit quiet by myself. I had too many worries, so I . . . .

Q. In order to forget about your worries, what did you do?

A. I just sat quietly by myself when we sit, we can think about . . . then we just recited the *Dharma*. In Pol Pot's regime, I have never . . . I have never ever decapitated a chicken, never, and I was clean. I have not even gone out to catch fish like everybody else. I have never killed any animal. Sometimes, when I was doing the labor, some people knew that I was unhappy. There were some people who used to know me from the old government's time; they also knew my mother. Some of the old folks in the village also knew about me. Every time one of them saw that I was by myself she would come over and try to talk to me so I would not think about my sorrow, so that I would not be too unhappy. When it was quiet, she would tell me not to be too unhappy, well, like, I should not be too unhappy. I don't like to have a conversation with anybody. I was looking for a place to rest. When I recited the *Dharma*, my pains were lessened. I reflected according to Buddha's principles. There is death. When there is life, there is bound to be separations. When I reasoned this way, I tried not to be too sorrowful. I did this when I was sorrowful, and my face would be very sad. Happiness is the counterpart of sorrow, and laughter is the counterpart of crying. When I thought about this precept, I felt better. This way, I thought those who died escaped the sorrow temporarily. Those who are alive always have sorrows. The old folks would come to me and tell me that my children had no father and I should not make them orphans again by not having a mother. I was reasoning about this for a long time, and I felt better, but in the back of my mind I still had some sorrows. Not all of the sorrows were gone. I thought about my children, about their future. They were born, they saw the sun light, we would not abandon them. The father had died, so, the mother should remain.

Q. When you recited the *Dharma*, and thought about Buddha's merits, did you feel any different than you usually did?

A. Sometimes I would stand up or sit down and sometimes when I sat down, my mind did not stay in one place, it wandered. When I thought about my past, my mind was concentrated on it. Some times I was lost in my thought that I did not come back to reality unless someone walked by and brushed against me. Sometimes this happened at my work place.

Q. At that time, you felt like there was no time element, right?

A. I did not feel anything. Sometimes, the people came by and said that it was time to rest. When we rested for about half an hour, they had a lunch break. After we ate, we could take a short rest. Sometimes they allowed us to rest for ten minutes. So, for that period of time, I would go away from the crowd. It was not all that

far, it was like a distance from a tree to the next tree. Sometimes, my mind would wander away, and I forgot about the time to resume the labor. I sat down and leaned against a tree. I leaned against a tree and crossed my legs flat on the ground, and rested my hands on the ground, and closed my eyes as if I would go to sleep.

Q. In Pol Pot's regime, have you ever felt as if you had no feeling, no senses at all?

A. Ever since my husband died, sometimes when I walked, I felt like I was lost in my thought, as if I had lost all my senses. Sometimes when I walked, I would step in the puddles; this happened to me, yes me. Those who walked with me would say: "How do you walk?" Those who were aware of my past told me to try to hold my self together in order to struggle on. At that time, I got thinner and thinner.

Q. Have you ever thought that your life was under the Khmer Rouge's command and in their hands?

A. If I had to live the way I did just for three or four more years under Pol Pot's regime, I will have to die. I am saying that if my life was spent the way it was, it will have to be finished. It was not finished because I would be taken away to be killed, but it was finished because of my sorrows, and I would waste away on my own due to the chronic sorrow and the illness, so I will be finished, period.

Q. What did you do to bear those sorrows?

A. I did not know what to do when I had the sorrow then. One day my mother said: "Don't have so much sorrow, so you will be able to care for your daughter, so they too can live on, and you will be able to struggle on." So I said that I didn't worry about anything. Well the food ration which was given to us was enough. I always told her that I had enough of everything. But, I was thinking about everything. I was thinking about the hardship. When I came back from the labor, my daughter saw me, and in the mourning, I was gone again. Well, we did the labor from early in the morning till the evening, then I got to see my daughter. I did not know how they would be in the future. In the Pol Pot's regime, there was no future, no education, no information, no schooling, no formal education or advanced classes, no law enforcement, and no developments. When I was sorrowful, I forgot about my misery when I saw my daughter's.

Q. During that period of time, have you ever thought that you were going to die, or that you would die?

A. In Pol Pot's regime, I thought that if I lived that way for a long period of time, I would definitely die. I hoped that I would definitely die. After my husband was taken away to be killed, I said to myself that one of these days I would be taken

away to be killed too. I must move and change the place of residence. They must take me away to be killed, and if I were to die, then I had done everything possible to avoid death.

Q. What are your superstitions? What ceremonies did you hold to counter these superstitions?

A. I have seen these superstitions manifest themselves. For example, my younger brother was a victim of superstition. Someone cast a love spell on him. He was not aware of that. He was not sick right after the spell was cast on him. He was gradually sick. Sometimes he had a headache, feeling dizzy and other times he was feeling tired, as if having a bad circulation. When I got here in 1982, about two months after I arrived, my brother began to get sick. He said that first he was extremely tired. He felt as if his limbs were lifeless. Sometimes he felt like his heart was not functioning right. He could not place his finger on how his heart was beating. Sometimes he felt that his limbs were lifeless. We called the ambulance and he went to the hospital. At the hospital the doctor examined him and said that he was not sick. My brother did not believe that. We had some doctors examine him and did all we could do. At the time, I had Medicaid, and he was treated for one year. Even in 1983, he was not cured yet.

One day I heard the Old Man talk about my brother. The first year we heard about the Old Man he came to Boston. The Old Man was simply a Buddhist nun who adhered to the ten Buddhist principles, but she was a kind of medium for the Old Man's spirit, and people called her the "long haired Old Man." He said: "You have a spell cast on you. The doctors cannot cure you." At the time, I was stunned. When he went to the doctors, they said that he was not sick. They said that he had a mental illness. When he went to the mental health clinic, they could not find anything wrong with him either. So I didn't know what kind of a doctor he had to see when I received such reports. Well, the kind of sickness he had was like he was not sick at all. He was fatter and fatter. While he was fat, he had no energy. Then I thought, he was not cured by any doctor. I went to Washington, DC because the Old Man stayed there. So I told my brother to go there. "Go there and stay there for three or four months. You don't have to pay for the rent. You will have to do things for the monk at the temple, and you can gather the merits by serving the monk." He went to Washington, DC and stayed at the temple for five or six months. The Old Man did not know any other remedy except for pouring the water on my brother and spitting his saliva mixed with betel chews and areca nuts. She spit everywhere on his face and head, then she poured water on him. The water was blessed by reciting a special magic formula. When she poured the water on him, there was a kind of waxy substance coming out, floating in the water. The substance was on his skull. He shoved his head. The Old Man told him not to keep his hair, so he shaved his head. After he

shaved his head, something in big slabs came off.

Q. What came off in big slabs?

A. They were like waxy scabs, as if the spell has been cast on him for so long by a voodoo practitioner, that the wax was accumulated and it was coming off. When the Old Man poured water on him, it came off. The water was normal; it was a regular hot and cold water. My brother was very afraid of water. He was afraid of water. He did not dare go near the water. Sometimes when he took a shower, he acted as if he was shaken, he was even shaken when he took a warm shower. He did not dare take a shower. Right now, when he is cured he is alright. He is not sick any longer. The Old Man poured the blessed water on him. He said that he treated him for six months. He said that he suffered a spell voodoo which was cast on him for about ten years now. It was not just cast on him for a year or so, but he was alright up to the time he felt sick. But then he did not feel sick at all. The spell was cast by two or three girls, you know, not just one girl. But you see, it is up to the people to believe this or not, but I witnessed this myself, with my own eyes. It was for real. He spit on him and poured the blessed water on him for six months. She used the residue from her betel and areca nut chews to apply on his body, even his head and other parts of the body too. After many years, the spell was set in his body. The Old Man said that she would have to treat him at least six months. He told us that the time needed to treat this kind of spell until it wears off completely would be a year and a half.

Q. What did he do to find out that your brother suffered a spell?

A. She asked him about his birth date. He told her his birth date and his age. She calculated according to her astrological formula and she knew that someone casts a spell on him. He never had any superstition at all. But then, he saw it with his own eyes. So then he knew that a spell was really cast on him and made him sick. His sickness was like in the story, "The Devious Woman Who Pulled the *Yinger*" in which the woman committed adultery. That I saw once.

Q. Do you know how a voodoo person casts a spell on his victim?

A. I never know how a spell was cast. I have only seen the medium take the spell out. The victim's family has to arrange to set up a kind of offering to the medium's spiritual teacher. There should be a white sheet, and the dimension varies according to the degree of the illness. For a serious sickness, they would have an offering of a white sheet, candles, joss sticks, areca nuts, betel leaves, lime powder, two bags of sugar and five dollars, that was all. They left all these offerings at the place where they would set up for the offering. The medium would pour the blessed water on the victim and spit on him/her everyday. The

Old Man's teacher was different from other teachers. Sometimes she would talk about the *Dharma* and had a discussion about them. When we sat near her, she would spit on us and walked on. She did not take care of just one patient, there would be a row of people who suffered a spell cast on them.

In Washington, DC a lady bought a house. When she bought that house, she said that sometimes she would see an American lady hang herself and was suspended from the ceiling; some other times she saw her calling out to her. The owner of the house then invited Venerable Ong Mien, the temple's chief monk, to her house to recite a special kind of Dharma to exorcize the spirit three times, but she still had those visions. One day she invited Venerable Ong Mien to her house again for lunch. Venerable Ong Mien said to the Old Man: "Why don't you come with me? I am invited to go and recite the *Dharma*." So the Old Man said: "Ok, I will go with you." The long haired Old Man went along with the monk. He has a cane. The lady of the house asked the Old Man to spend the night there. The next morning he left the house. When he left, he forgot the cane. It was the medium who forgot it. So he left the cane at the house. The lady of the house was afraid that her children might play with it. So she took it and kept it at the head of a bed in the room where she saw the ghost. Sometimes she saw a vision of a stark naked lady. She saw the vision as if it was in real life. She told us about this when she bought the house. When she sold it, no one bought it. It was as though the ghost made it so no one wanted to buy it. The ghost did something so that she could not sell it. This was what the Old Man said. The lady took the Old Man's cane and kept it safely at the head board of the bed. It belonged to the Old Man, so she was very careful about it. Ever since she put the cane in that room, she never saw any apparition at all. The children were also in good health, and in good spirit until now. The family was grateful to the Old Man and gave the medium 500 dollars.

Q. Was the cane left at the house for ever?

A. No. The Old Man telephoned the lady and asked her if she had seen her cane. The owner of the house said that she did and said: "I was afraid that the children might play with it so I put it over there, at that place." Ever since she had the cane, she never saw anything at all. Everything was quiet so Old Man took it back. The Old Man said: "You are lucky to meet the Old Man." The owner of the house was very happy and gave her 500 dollars. She put the money in her pocket and did not realize it. When she got back to her quarter, she unfolded the package, opened the envelope, then she saw 500 dollars. This is people's superstition. The lady saw it herself. I have not seen it, but she saw it and the Old Man exorcized it with his cane. Therefore, she believed in the Old Man's power.

Talking about some one who was under somebody's spell. I have never seen how

it was cast, but I have seen how a spell was undone. There was a lady who opened up a jewelry store in Texas. There were Vietnamese and Chinese stores lining up near by. She saw a person hammer a nail on one of the Vietnamese stores. She stood and watched the Vietnamese hammer the nail. The spell from the nailing made her feel very sick. One of the people who tried to take off the nail died. He was under the person's spell. One person died. As for the other one, he was saved by the Old Man. As soon as the Old Man chewed the betel chews, she told the victim to open the mouth and she put the chews in it; as soon as she put the betel chews in the mouth, she spit on him/her from the head to the toes, he vomited rusty nails and fish hooks.

Q. Did the nails and hooks really come out?

A. The fish hooks and the nails really came out; it was for real. As soon as he vomited, the Old Man saw those things. She said that she is able to cure the victims when the spell is recently cased. At the time, she only went to stay in Texas for one week. There were many similar cases in Washington, DC. The person who died was a relative of the Vietnamese store's owner. He only went to the store to see what was happening.

Q. Why did the person hammer the nail?

A. I don't know why he hammered the nail. I guess he was casting a spell. We did not know when it was hammered. We just went around to see someone pull it out and we could feel the vibration of the spell. The person vomited nails. The Old Man's nephew did not have any belief in him at all. Even when he was capable of curing all of these victims. He did not have any belief in him. One day he had a spell cast on him when this happened he did not know that it was a voodoo's work. He was unconscious. The doctor examined him and found nothing wrong with him. So the Old Man said, well, bring him to me, and bow to me. The Old Man said: "Well, it is alright if he does not believe in me. It is alright if he does not enlist my help." He spit on him, and he poured blessed water on him. He vomited slime and some kind of needle shaped things, like worms. They came up through the mouth. As soon as the Old Man said: "Hey, it is coming. Bring a spitting pot for him." He vomited right away. I was very scared when I saw that.

Q. Have you ever seen things of this sort happen?

A. I did not dare go to watch it at all. I saw it and didn't dare watch it. When someone vomited, I did not dare go and watch it. I went to Washington State one time. I saw her treat a victim the same way. When the victim vomited, I didn't dare go near him/her. I am very afraid. Whenever I saw someone vomit, I wanted to vomit too. I did not want to go near the person. The victim was not any poor

person. She is cured, you know. When she was sick, another person in Texas was also sick. Both the husband and his wife were sick. Both were under someone's spell. If I am talking about the smell, it smells foul. Just like that of a decomposed corpse. The Old Man said that the voodoo person used a corpse's liquid.

- Q. How does the voodoo person cast a spell? What did he use to cast a spell?
- A. I don't really know how a spell was cast. I never knew how or saw it done. I only saw how a spell was undone. When the Old Man poured the blessed water on her, she smelled foul like a decomposed corpse would.
- Q. Before the victim received the blessed water, did she smell foul?
- A. Before she received the blessed water, she was sick and got fatter and fatter, but had no energy. He would do something for a short while and acted limp, as though a devious woman would act. It was a though he had no energy in his body. This was the reason why, this kind of superstition. I witnessed it myself, and that was why I said so. If I have not witnessed it, then I would not have said it either. This is a superstition. Well, during the Sangkum era, there was a monk who was good at curing broken arms and legs. My sister's arm was broken. She went to a monk and he took care of it. It was my sister who died. When we got there, the monk . . . . I bought a kind of oil just like a rubbing oil. The monk recited a magic formula into the oil, and we took it home and applied it on her arm. My sister's forearm was broken. He spit on her arm. He said: "Well, you don't live near by here; you shouldn't have to sleep at the pagoda. Your house is far from here. Just take this much oil and use it. You will be cured very fast. You will be cured after two weeks or one month of treatment."
- Q. He spit on her arm and he told her to go back every morning. She used the oil to rub on her arm at night. The oil was like a soft wax. It was used to rub on the hands. He would tie her arm and dress it. He gave her his betel leaves to apply on the arm. One month afterwards, the arm was healed.
- Q. Did she use any other medicines other than the soft wax and the betel chew residue?
- A. Yes, she did not use anything else except the monk's betel chews. The monk who cured her was a monk at the Au Manie pagoda. Yes, I have heard about him being very good in treating broken arms and legs. He usually took as offerings normal things such as candles, joss sticks and a small amount of money, like ten riels, so that he would not violate any rules set by his teacher. My sister's forearm was straight again, you see, but young people's arm heals very fast. At the time,



my sister was about 13 or 14 years old. She was growing very fast. This is what I am saying, what can I believe or not believe, but I saw it with my own eyes like that. But I really wondered about a spirit possessing a body, you know. I saw some people summon a spirit in a ceremony in a camp in Kap Cheun, when I was in Thailand. The way they did it was like, say, the day was set up to have the ceremony of the spirit's possession, they had music and they had a singer singing a song to conjure up the spirit. When it came it called out oh you children. The medium spoke in a high pitched voice and it said that the patient would be cured. But as far as for me, I don't like the spirit's possession. In order to make some offerings to this kind of spirit, they offer bananas, and rice wine. The medium drank rice wine and the spiritual medium was happy. It called out the red *Koun Krork*, or whatever. I only heard people talk about it, because I could not go to watch the ceremony performed. If I went to see it, I always wanted to hit the medium.

Q. Why did you want to hit the person?

A. I don't know why. But when I went to see it, I didn't like it. I hated it. I liked to go pray in front of the Buddha's statues or offering the flowers to Buddha. I also don't mind the flower dance, but when I went to see this spirit's possession ceremony, I just didn't like it, and I just walked away. According to my superstition . . . .

Q. Why did the people call her the Old Man? Was it a man or a woman? How old was she/he? Where is he/she living now?

A. The reason people call her the Old Man was because she was about 75 years old now. The medium is a woman, but she was possessed by the spirit of an Old Man. The people called her the Long Haired Old Man. Her voice was like that of an Old Man; it was a deep and low pitched voice.

Q. Why do people call her the Long Haired Old Man? Who was the Long Haired Old Man?

A. The spirit who possessed the old lady was the Long Haired Old Man. Why did people call him the Long Haired Old Man in the old days? They called him the Old Man. One day there was a story about him. The people just called him the Old Man. The people gave him a name and it is the Long Haired Old Man. There was a person who had a vision of him. The person said that the vision was that of an Old Man with a long hair and a hunched back and holding a cane. The person dreamed about the Old Man and that was the reason why people called him the Long Haired Old Man, because the person saw that his hair was long and he was holding a cane.

- Q. Did the people see the old lady who was his medium as an Old Man?
- A. His medium was at home and she did not know whether or not people can see her as the Old Man or not. But that person did not live in the same province as she did; the person who dreamed about the Old Man lived in another province. The person dreamed about the Long Haired Old Man. He asked the person: "Where are you going grandchild? Just call me the Long Haired Old Man." The person asked him: "How can I find your medium?" He said: "You sure are lucky. Now you meet me." Do you realize that a lady in Canada has seen the Long Haired Old Man since she was 18 years old. When she saw him in a dream he said: "When you see me take my betel leaves chews and keep them as medicines. When you get sick, just use these betel leaves chews. She dreamed about the Old Man ever since she was 18 years old. Now she is over 50 years old. She just meet the Old Man's medium. If we have any problems, we just pray to him. He would help us on the road, the dark road; for example, I prayed to him to help direct the bullets to another direction so they would not hit me. I prayed in my mind, I prayed to the voodoo, the angels to bless me. For example, if the robbers were at a place, I did not meet them there. That was my case. People told me: "Don't go there. That place has a lot of robbers." When I went there, I did not see them.
- Q. Were there any manifestations for the people to call the lady who was the medium, the Long Haired Old Man's medium?
- A. Well, because when the Old Man's spirit possessed her, he was a man; he appeared in a dream. In the dream, he would tell the person about his medium's physical appearance as a lady who was plump, having a fair complexion, with a firm face. When the people observed the medium's appearance, it matched with the Old Man's words in the dream.
- Q. When did she get this status as the Long Haired Old Man? Do you know?
- A. I don't know when she got the title, but she talked about her biography ever since she was in Phnom Penh. She was the district's chief's wife; now she is about 70 years old. She said that every time the Old Man came to "visit" her, he would take her to the forest for about one week at one time, so she could do some meditations there, away from the hustle and bustle, her husband would look for her. When the Old Man came back, the districts wife, she would sing *Sakrava*, a court song. She was still young at the time. She did not know she sung the song; she did it in spite of herself. Then the people knew what was happening, they brought joss sticks and candles. Her husband had some soldiers guard their house, so the people would not go inside. He built a separate house for her to

stay. Then the people really believed that she was the Old Man. The Old Man had this medium for 40 years now. When she lived in Phnom Penh, she lived around the Vath Phnom area. There was a man who lived in Phnom Penh and the Old Man named him Cham Raen. His given name was actually Vuth. At the present time, he lives in Providence. If someone does not believe about the Old Man, he can ask this person about the Old Man's biography.

Before Pol Pot people took over the city, the people asked him for the permission to put up a flag; he said: "You go ahead and put up a flag, but don't recite the *Chayontoa Dharma*." He wanted to help the Cambodian people. Well, some of them might have to die, but he did not want too many of them to die. This was his wish. He told them to go ahead and recite Buddha's *Dharma*, but not to recite the *Chayontoa*, not even the head monk should do it. The Old Man put up a flag and the medium sat and greeted the monks; the way she greeted them was not the same way we did it. When the Old Man came to possess the medium the monks recited the *Dharma*, when suddenly they recited the *Chayontoa*. The Old Man said: I won't respect you, you don't have to respect me. You Khmer Rouge people take one another as husband and wife without the benefit of a marriage. You wear shorts above the knees."

Q. Who recited the *Chayontoa* at the time?

A. All the monks recited the *Chayontoa*. The Old Man was half-way putting his flag up before the Pol Pot soldiers invaded the city, and he told the monks not to recite the *Chayontoa* because whoever did it might die. When they recited the *Chayontoa*, he said: I stop. How can they take one another without getting married? How can it be that there are houses without the residents." The Old Man's medium was scared with bullets, much more than anybody else. In the Pol Pot regime, she took care of her grandchildren. There was a military man who intended to take away his medium and killed her. The Old Man came in and possessed her. He said: "Grandchild, whatever you have to say you can say it to me. You don't have to talk to the medium. I will tell him for you." This was what he said, you see. The man said: "Why don't you go away." The Old Man said: "I am not leaving. If you don't want to tell me, I won't leave." He said: "Alright then, give me your tobacco chew." He answered: "Go ahead and take that tobacco chew right over there." He gave him the tobacco. The Pol Pot's soldier wanted to kill his medium. Ever since that time, we never saw the military man's face at all. We didn't know where he had gone to.

He had a bronze Buddha statue. He did not know that he was coming to the USA at all when he came here. The Old Man wanted all of us to go to the West. When he came and possessed her he said: "All of you go to the West. If you go to the West, you will have the opportunity to be alive. If you stay here, you will suffer a

great hardship. His medium did not believe that our country would be in a devastation state either. She said that our country was at peace. It was not a hard place to live in. This was the time when the Vietnamese invaded our country. The Old Man said: "Our country is alright; don't go any where else." But then the bronze Buddha statue which is connected to its pedestal base broke with a crack. She also had a big black "trorlap," small rounded wooden boxes for storing lip ointment, about 40 years old, containing a Buddha statue and it was also shattered all over. She had the pedestal reconstructed. The bronze Buddha statue was broken in half. Right after the Buddha statue broke, she left Cambodia and went to Khao I Dang refugee camp. She then submitted an application for a resettlement in the USA. But she failed the test. Her children urged her not to wear white clothes. She failed the test at Chun Buri camp and remained in Thailand for one year. Even though she remained in Chun Buri for a year, she did not lack anything. The Thai people went to see her and enlist her help so they brought her flowers, foods and sweets. Some people were in jail and they wanted the Old Man to help them. Others suffered a spell cast on them because they lost in their business. She gave them advice saying: "Try to do good deeds; don't do bad deeds. When you do bad deeds, then you won't last very long." When the Old Man came to Boston, USA, "he" would give us advice based on Buddha's principles. He never advised us to be dishonest or devious. He advised us: "Try to do good deeds; don't take advantage of other people. If you make a profit from a business, tell the people that you make a profit and don't try to hide it. If you do, then you will not last very long. Don't take advantage of other people." I noticed that, well, for example, in the camps, those who bought and sold gold and those who stole statues such as the *Neak Ta's* heads, or others who stole from the Angkor Wat Temple to sell to the Thais did not live very long. I always heard that they had died. I have heard rumors about these people who stole many ancient statues and sold them to the Thais. Some of these people died after they got the money and returned to the camp. One Old Man bragged that he was a monk and lived in Thailand and that he was free to travel in and out of Thailand. He has seen a statue. Its upper part, the head and bust is a Cambodian statue, but the lower part was engraved in Thai alphabet. In fact, the statue was Cambodian, judging from the carvings. They got all of these statues from Cambodia. The Angkor Wat Temple stood empty, without its statues.

Q. In Pol Pot regime, did you have any superstitions? Did you ever have any dream?

A. In Pol Pot regime, I have never seen dream about anything bad. I have never gone anywhere at all. Sometimes I dreamed that I wanted to go to my mother's house. I dreamed that I got things when I went there. It was alright when I went there. Before they took my husband away to be killed, I dreamed about something, you see. When I went to sleep, I screamed in the middle of the night. I dreamed that the Khmer Rouge took my husband away to some place, a remote place far away

from me. I called out to him, but he did not hear me. I was frightened and I screamed in the middle of the night. I dreamed about this only one month before they took him away.

- Q. Before Pol Pot's regime, did you have any dreams, or any premonitions to warn you about something that will happen, like the experiences which you mentioned above?
- A. No, I did not.
- Q. Was the old lady who is called the Old Man whom you just mentioned a nun?
- A. She is a nun, but she does not live in Washington, DC. Sometimes she went there to participate in the *Vossa* celebration whereby the monks do not leave their temples to go begging for foods due to the rain and did meditation for three or four months. She adheres to the ten Buddhist precepts.
- Q. Is she a Buddhist nun or is she a special person?
- A. I would say that she is a teacher, an *Acha*. She does not live in the temple, however. She lives outside the temple. She does not live in Washington, DC. She lives in Seattle, Washington State, which is her permanent home. She traveled everywhere. She was even invited to go to Switzerland too.
- Q. Did she teach the Buddhist monks?
- A. No, she does not. The monks study in the Buddhist manuals. The Old Man is a teacher. Wherever he went to, he had many student followers. When he cured the people, they were grateful to him, and they would buy things for him such as rice, so on so forth for him. He did not take them for himself at all, he only took them to the temple.
- Q. What kind of superstitions do you have?
- A. At present time, I have an altar for offerings at my house. I have my schedule. I prayed according to Buddhism. There was not *Dharma* recitation involved. This means that when I pray everyday, I would light up the joss sticks and prayed to Buddhism, to the spirit who watches over my house, that is the house's spirit, the *Neak Ta*, the guardian spirit who watches over a city or town, who is in our house, and who is invisible to us. I am afraid that I might step on or over him, and I don't want him to be angry with me. I also prayed to the *Thevadas* (male angels) to watch over me and safe guard me wherever I am going to, so that I won't have any accident, and so that they guard me from my misfortune. May any misfortune be

far away from my path. For me, before I left my house, I always lit up the joss sticks, prayed, then I left.

Q. What do you have to worship?

A. It includes Buddha statues, with multi-colored lights and fresh flowers. The plastic flowers are only for decoration. I like gold color, so I put gold color flowers. I bought some flowers made from material and put them in front of Buddha. I light up the joss sticks and the candles everyday. Sometimes when I was very tired, I just lit up one single joss stick and recited the *Nomo* prayer three times, and went to sleep. Every morning before I left for work, I prayed three times. I also prayed three times before I went to sleep. My own belief is that she guided us according to Buddhism, to do good deeds. You know, I have been informed about the Buddhist principles for quite a long time now, now that I witness this with my own eyes, I really believe in him. It is a good thing that we prayed, because, you see, everyday, I try to keep my mind calm, not to be angry, but I can not achieve all of these goals yet. At present, once a week, I have to fast once for the evening meal. I don't eat anything. When I ate breakfast, I only ate vegetables. I did not eat meat at all. I don't even use fish sauce, as long as the food has fish or meat product, I don't use it at all; I only take vegetables. I adhered to this principle every "*Sel Day*" (Buddhist worship day), depending on the day it fell on.

Q. When you did not eat the evening meals? Were you hungry in the mornings?

A. I eat breakfast every morning before I went to work. When I did not go to work, I have never eaten breakfast in the morning. When I go to work, I would eat anyway, since I was working, so that I would not get weak. I practice this habit since I was young. I used to fast on *Sel Day* like this, you know. This is according to Buddha's principles. This means we must be able to control our mind concerning food, so that we will not indulge ourselves too much in eating, or working too hard. When we go to work, we should just work, and not take advantage of people's trust, and be greedy. We should not be angry when someone did some wrong to you. We must learn how to control our mind and our heart.

Q. Why don't you want to get angry?

A. Well, anger is . . . it is like, when someone says something to us, the word was not offending enough to make us angry, but well, we would get furious. It is like, someone says something to us and makes us angry, but we would not get angry, then it is like we control ourselves not to get angry when someone says something to us that hurts our feeling very much. When someone says something that really

offends us, then we just say one word back. Well, it is like, *Preah Vessandara*, before he became Buddha, even he could not attain the enlightenment because of anger. The Pali word *Tosak* means "anger" in Cambodian. When we get very angry, anger can lead us to a fist fight, and we do not want to have any further problems. For example, at work, when someone says something bad to you, you should force yourself to walk away and pretend not to hear him/her, and to be deaf and dumb, so that the anger can dissipate. We should not keep anger in our heart.

Q. Are you a student of the nun called the Old Man?

A. Well, you can say that I am the Old Man's student, because I used to have my brother go to her for treatment. I am like one of her students. At first, I have never met or known her. When I have a serious problem, I know that I usually don't talk about it. For example, when something was about to happen, and sometimes when I went somewhere where something bad was bound to happen then I had a vision. Well like when my aunt died, I dreamed that she came over, and I also saw a coffin. I have never seen anything like this before. I called her, and she did not even talk to me. I dreamed about her after I arrived in the U.S. My relatives sent me a letter informing me that she had died.

Q. According to your interpretation of your dreams, what does each one of them mean?

A. No, I have never interpreted any dreams at all. When I was young my eyes would twitch. When my left eye twitched, then there would be a problem such as a fight, or else, when I did not do anything to anybody to deserve it someone hit and injured my head. But when my right eye twitched, when I got home, either my father or mother would undoubtedly scold me. I did not even know why or for what reason they scolded me but they did. If my mouth twitched, I would get something like, in the old days, I would win a lottery, but now, I never experience it, never.

Q. In the United States, did you ever have a bad dream, and do the dreams have any more meaning to you?

A. I have not had any bad dream. Sometimes I dreamed that either my father or husband came over. I saw that my father and stood and looked at me. I called him, but he turned his back to me, and did not talk to me, then he walked away and disappeared. From what I could interpret these dreams, when I dreamed about a person and he did not talk to me, and turned his/her back too me, this means that the person was deceased. He is not at all alive. When I was a personnel at the Assembly, there was a white hair on my arm. It grew quite long in just one week. At that time, I was promoted to a position as a "leader person."

But now, that white hair disappeared. 3 - Part 7

Q Can you sing, or do you know any poetry?

A I don't know how to sing, and I don't know any poetry either.

In my personal opinion, it would be beneficial if people did the labor together, but at the same time, they could also have their own business to work for. The rule of work the wealth from the rich and give it to the poor, but all of us would usually do the labor. The people could do private business and sell their products. In the regime that which should not make any profit on it. But in that regime, it was a more genocide, the Cambodians killing their own people.

Q Did the Cambodian Communists have a Cambodian characteristic?

A Communism does not have a Cambodian custom's characteristic. For example, in the Cambodian custom, when people get married the parents must be asked and asked the bride's habits in marriage for their sons and asking a tradition. The parents were informed of their children's affairs, and there would be a marriage ceremony. But in Pol Pot's regime, there was nothing at all, no couple would hold each other's hands while no naming, and there was no inheritance, the parents did not know about it. They did not ask the bride and groom if they agreed to marry each other or not, or if they loved each other, they just forced them to get married, and if they did not take each other, then they would be killed. This was not a Cambodian tradition, I don't know what it was.

Q Therefore, this means that the Communists did not have any Cambodian characteristic other than the Cambodian language of the Cambodian people?

A There were some characteristic, but there were not many. For example, in the past, there were only two. If you gave good work people were equal in work, but when they talk, people to be killed, then it was not equal. Why did they make the people to do the farming in the area which would not be farmed? Just that, when it was you will understand. If I was allowed to express my opinion, I don't agree with their ideal.

Q Do you still remember your parents or your grandparents words of guidance, or any thoughts? Do you still remember any legends or folktales or parables?

A There was a proverb which bears a moral: "Don't follow the teacher's hypocrisy, follow the teacher's teaching." This means that when we see that our teacher



## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 7

- Q. What are the Cambodian Communists? Does this mean that they are Cambodians?
- A. In my personal opinion, it would be beneficiary if people did the labor together, but at the same time, they could also have their own business as usual, and if the regime took the wealth from the rich and gave it to the poor, and all of us would equally do the labor. The people could do private business and sell their merchandise to the regime state which should not make any profit on us. But, in Pol Pot's regime, it was a mere genocide, the Cambodians killing their own people.
- Q. Did the Cambodian Communism have a Cambodian characteristic?
- A. Communism does not have a Cambodian custom's characteristic. For example, in our Cambodian custom, when people get married the parents were the ones who asked the bride's hands in marriage for their sons according to tradition. The parents were informed of their children's affairs, and there would be a marriage ceremony. But, in Pol Pot's regime, there was nothing at all, the couple merely held each other's hands with no meaning, and there was nothing else, the parents did not know about it. They did not ask the bride and groom if they agreed to marry each other or not, or if they loved each other either, they just married them off, and if they did not take each other, then they would be killed. This was not a Cambodian tradition, I don't know what it was.
- Q. Therefore, this means that the Communists do not keep anything that is a Cambodian characteristic other than the Cambodians who are just the Cambodian people?
- A. There were some characteristics, but there were not many of them; for example, in ten, there were only two. It was quite good when people were equal in wealth, but when they took people to be killed, then it was too cruel. Why did they make the people to do the farming in the area which could not be farmed? Just think about it, and you will understand. If I am allowed to express any opinion at all, I don't agree with their ideal.
- Q. Do you still remember your parents or your grandparents' words of guidance, or any proverbs? Do you still remember any legends or Buddha's predictions?
- A. There was a proverb which bears a moral: "Don't follow the teacher's hypocrisy; follow the teacher's teaching." This means that when we see that our teacher

makes a mistake, we should not make his mistakes. If the teacher taught us a principle, then we should adhere to it. This proverb should be remembered and followed. For example, when our parents did something wrong, let us say, or father is drunk and beats his children, then we should not drink as he does. My father only taught me these two sentences when he parted. He wrote this proverb on the walls too. I have forgotten the proverbs, I can not remember them.

Q. Do you still remember various Pol Pot's slogans?

A. Pol Pot's slogans are such as: morals illness, "shaking with fever, trembling with fever, shaking like a tractor, having a fever but you can still eat rice." Why did the Khmer Rouge say this? At the time, we needed a lot of nutrition, so we were shaking, having a malaria and passing it on. I really believed that the people did have the fever, because in the old Sangkum government when I went to sleep, I had to put up a mosquito net. But in Pol Pot's regime, when his people came into the cities, the girl comrades, those who wear black skirts, black blouses and coming out of the jungle, did not sleep in mosquito nets. The mosquitoes bit them. They had a malaria and passed it on to us. This is the reason why there were many malaria cases. There were not enough nutritious food around, and we got the malaria easily. When we saw rice, of course we ate it. This was why there was a slogan: "shaking with fever, trembling with fever, shaking like a tractor, having a fever but you can still eat rice." There was another slogan: they would say we had morals sickness, which means we were hypocrites, that we were not really sick. There was a slogan: "there were houses with no one in them; there were roads with no one walking in them." "People fought over a grain of rice." This latter one is actually Buddha's prediction. This is really true. The Khmer Rouge chased all the people who owned big mansions out, and they lived in the huts in the rice fields. We did not have any roads to walk in. There was nobody walking in the big roads since they evacuated all the people out of the cities. As for a grain of rice which was stuck to a dog's tail in Buddha's predictions, we would of course fight one another to get it. We would not even let a grain of rice fall to the ground. There was a saying which goes: "Phnom Penh falls, Bangkok melts, Angkor Wat is a lot of fun and peaceful."

The Old Man says that Cambodia falls, and Cambodia won't have any peace until Bangkok is in turmoil again. If the fire of war burns Cambodia, other countries would have to be burned too before Cambodia can have peace. Don't you believe the people at the border. The Old Man said that those who say that everything is alright are all thieves. When she said that, I just kept quiet. I am waiting to see what happens. If the Old Man said this, then what will happen in the future?

Q. What were some of the words that the Khmer Rouge changed in the Communist regime?

- A. They changed some words into: *mit* (friend). They did not allow anyone to use the word *pisa*, the polite word for "to eat." They wanted us to use the word *hobe* ("to eat" for the farmers). The children could not even use the word *nham*, a popular word for eating, they had us use the word *hobe*. They called the parents *uwpuk madaay*, a formal word for "parents" and did not allow us to call ours *Pa* and *Mak* (*pa*=father, from a French word; *mak*=mother). They wanted us to call our parents *puk* and *mae* ("father" and "mother" for farmers). If someone refused to use the words *puk* and *mae*, they would ask him/her: "friend, are you an enemy or something?" They always used the words: friend, *puk*, *mae*, and *hobe*.
- Q. Do you still remember the proverbs, or your parents' words of guidance, or Buddha's predictions?
- A. There is a proverb which goes: "A four legged elephant can still stumble, a learned scholar can still forget." This means that the elephants have four legs, but when they walk, they might still stumble and fall into a ditch and break their legs. As for the scholars, no matter how learned they can be, they will still forget. There are some examples for the people to learn in life. When they are educated, they should not brag that they never forget. Another proverb is: "study makes a man educated, work makes a man wealthy." We won't be educated unless we study. It does not matter how much or how little we learn, but we do learn something. We will get rich only when we try to work hard which enables us to make money to spend. There is another proverb which goes: "Do go when you are called, don't go when you see someone get something." This proverb means that: for example, we went out to fish and got some fish. Today, we are going to look for some fish. Our friends were going and asked us if we would like to go along too, so we said that we were not going that day. But then our friends caught a lot of fish, and the next day, we would want to go too, but when we went there we got nothing.
- Q. Please tell us about your escape from Cambodia, and your life and your family's in the camp.
- A. First, my mother lived in Battambang city. Then I heard about the people who smuggled back and forth between Au and Battambang. I wanted to smuggle like they did. First I thought, well, I will be going to Au anyhow. You know, I have never lived my life as a smuggler, never. Well, I just follow an older man who told me to walk faster, because if I walked slowly, I could not catch up with the rest of the people. Since I did not know the way, I just followed the people. My mother gave me some money. Well, she had some merchandise and she would give them to me to see and get the capital to start a trade. First, I got to a place. The people told me not to spend the nights on the way, at Seung. They were afraid we might encounter some dangers. At the time, when I went there, the

mines were not placed along the roads yet. It was in 1980. When I traveled to the border then, I did not know what was really happening. All I knew then was to follow the other people. I just ran after them. I have never walked that fast in my life. I walked and I ran at the same time and kept up with the people. First I just went there alone. When I got to the camps, everything was quiet. I saw the "para" soldiers walking back and forth. I said to myself: "Gee, I don't know what to buy, and how to buy the merchandise. I don't know how to buy them." I told the Old Man: "Please tell me what to do." I was waiting for a long time, so I spent more and more money. One day, I met a woman whose husband was a "para" soldier and who knew me. I asked them for the permission to spend the night in the camp. They asked me: "Are you alone or do you have company?" So I said: "No, I don't. I am alone. I have a hammock. Can I tie it to the trees and sleep on it? Just let me stay here temporarily, because I need to buy some more merchandise from the Thai village the next morning." The next morning, I went inside the Thai village, and bought some merchandise and sold them and got some profits. In one week, I was able to make a profit of 700 or 800 bahts. I bought some rice and carried it across the pole on my shoulders from the Nang Chan camp all the way to Battambang to take my mother to the camp. When I got to my mother's house, she was out of everything. It was as dry as a bone. She had nothing: no rice in the rice jar, nothing. At the time, I went to the border for about two weeks. When I got back, my mother was out of everything. Tears ran down my cheeks when I saw this; it was too much. I told her that I could only wait for her for two more days since I could only carry a bushel of rice. It was hard for me to travel, besides I had no money. I had some merchandises there which I used up the money to buy, because my merchandises. When I went to the border, I made some profits. I left them with some people to sell them for me and telling them that I only had a few things. When I took my mother to the camp, some neighbors wanted to go along too. They had no rice to eat either. There were my neighbors. So I said: "Well, I don't know what to do either. Now, I have a bushel of rice to carry for my family. We will have to do anything possible to get to Nang Chan camp first." This is what I said to them.

- Q. Where was auntie when she was out of food? From what town did you carry the rice?
- A. She was out of food when she was in Battambang city. She had no rice, nothing. I carried rice from the Nang Chan camp for my mother, and I went to take along younger siblings, my child, my mother, all of them, our neighbors also wanted to go along too, and I went to the camp. When I got to Battambang, it was evening, and my mother was out of rice and everything else. As for my child . . . oh God, my child did not cry at all. My mother had no rice and all my child did was to look dejected, and they just sat in the house. Luckily I got there, and I also got some rice, so we made porridge. I told my mother: "Mother, please have some

porridge." After she finished eating the porridge I told her that I only waited for her one more day, because the day after the next day I have to leave and go back because I really don't know what is going to happen to my merchandises at the camp. When we traveled, we had to spend the night at Svay, because my mother was exhausted. I said: "Mother, please rest here in Svay (Sisophon or Sereisaophoan)." She spent the night there. When we left Svay and continued our journey, we met the Vietnamese autonomies. They did not allow us to get out, because they were leaving early in the morning. At the time, there were many people who left. There were the families of the military personnel, about four or five of them, who were leaving too, but they were all familiar with the roads. I said that I know the roads somewhat, and I would not get lost, since the people kept walking on and on. My mother walked along the roads where the *Prich* bushes grow and she got her feet cut with them. You see, we had no shoes. Our feet and hands were cut. When we got to Seung, it was night time and we had to spend one ore night there, because the Vietnamese did not allow us to leave the village, and we left the next day. So I said to the rest of the people to go my way, and not to follow the other people's way. The people told me that the Vietnamese guarded the place and not for us to go by that road, and that we should leave by the other way. So we wandered around. The Vietnamese soldiers left for lunch at 12:00 noon. We just came out everywhere, and it was raining then. We had to walk and sometimes, we had to swim, and the water was up to my neck, and all of us swam in the water. My younger sibling, Khon, was drowning. He hoisted my child, his nephew, on his neck, and they were drowning on the way, and I didn't know what has happened. A man walked behind us and saw them drowning, so he helped them out of the water. It was raining at the time, and my child was cold. I saw that my mother had a hard time walking a long distance so I spend four or five *hums*, a measure of gold, to hire a cart and ride in it from that point on. When we got Seung, we spent the night at a villager's house. The next morning my mother had to leave for the trip. We were intercepted by the Vietnamese who forbid us to leave and forced us to turn back. When they made us turn back. When they made us turn back I said . . . it was nine o'clock when we could finally leave, and we got to the fourth front line, the Vietnamese stopped us again. We spent one night behind the front line, then traveled on. There was no mine there yet, but right after the fourth front line, roads were all mined. When there were mines, they would cover them with leaves so we would know. I was lucky. We walked all the way and we were safe. My mother's feet were lacerated. A little while after we started our journey, a smuggler came from the camp and had about ten sticks of French breads. He gave some to my child who was still small, and was half naked. He/she gave us some bread. My child gave some of his/her grandmother and his/her aunt and uncle and kept some for his/her mother and himself/herself. At the time he/she was only about over two years or three years. I felt very compassionate for him/her when we got to the camp. I brought four more families with me. They all had small

children and they all followed me. When we approached the crossroad, they were left behind because other people walked quite fast. A woman had her feet lacerated so I said: "Mother, please walk a little faster. If you don't try to walk faster, you can't spend the night on this road, no, it is not possible, because it is very risky. I am afraid of the Khmer Rouge soldiers." If we don't have any money to give them, they might shoot us dead right there and then; that was the reason why I tried very hard to walk fast. We walked and stepped over the mines. I told the people to walk carefully, and to be extra careful. When we got closer to the camps, there would be no mines. I told them to follow me. We got to the camp at night, and we all made . . . we rested there temporarily, you know. The next morning, I went to the person who took my merchandises and left them with some smugglers for selling. They sold them. They did not give me any merchandise, you see. I had no money up to the time when . . . I had no money at all. When they sold my merchandises and did not give me the money, I said: "Well, now, you don't give me any money. What are you going to do?" Where do I get the money? My mother is here." At the time, they had not given us any rice ration yet. I had no money so I was very worried. This went on until three days later. Three days later I met a person named Chief who used to call my mother "mother" for quite a while. We know each other from the Sang Kum government. He saw that I had no money. He gave me 100 bahts to buy rice. But I didn't dare buy some rice for consumption. My younger sibling went to find some fish to sell in order to . . . I didn't dare do any trade since I only had 100 bahts. I bought some rice and sold it by using a tin can to measure it so I can make some profits. By doing some trades, I accumulated more and more money. Then, I stop trading heavy merchandise such as rice. I was trading some materials. I bought some materials and let my younger sibling help me sell them. There were three of us doing some trading: my two younger brothers and myself. My mother, one of my younger brothers, my child, and my youngest sister, all four of them stayed home, waiting for the moment to pack and leave again as there would be some one to be at home. I was quite destitute and we had a hard time. When I had nothing at all, my child had nothing to eat, you know, because there was absolutely nothing, and she was hungry. For example, the neighbors' children asked their parents for some money to buy some ice cream, or whatever. My child did not dare do anything when she was hungry. She went to open up the rice pot's lid and found neither rice nor porridge and she would sit in the house and looking dejected. She would not cry and demand anything to eat. I felt so sorry for her. I had no money. When I was given 100 bahts, I used them to do some trades. My brother found some fish and sold them. We would combine our earnings which amounted to 300 or 400 bahts. After trading for awhile, my income went up and up to the point where I could buy some gold. When we had some gold, we could keep it to sell in the future. One day, there were some shootings. We were running and got separated, I ran to one direction and my brother to another. We got together afterwards. All together we fled our home

because of the fighting about five or six times.

Q. What factions were shooting at one another?

A. At that time, the Khmer Rouge and the Para factions were fighting and I didn't really know what was going on. Sometimes those soldiers from the old camps went and shoot the new camps. Sometimes, the soldiers from the new camp shoot the old camps. They were all Cambodians whenever they shot at one another. The Thais would shell them; the Thais always shelled them to add to the problems. It was a real hard ship over there. I was doing some trading one day, people were being taken to the Khao I Dang camp, and I wanted to go there too. My brother said: "Don't got there yet. We still don't have enough money from the trading. When we go there and stayed on, the money may run out on us." So I said: "alright, we stay a while longer." We did until they stopped providing the trucks to take us back and forth. One day, I left the old camp to stay in the new camp. Then I left the new camp and stayed in the old camp. I was trading in the Kork Theyoong area, between the old and the new camps, half way between Nong Chan and Nong Samit. It was half way between the two camps. The people from Kampong Cham city robbed me. They wore jeans, *tetron* shirts and a checkered scarf hanging down the front. When they robbed us, they shelled us, using what is called B-40, two smugglers, a woman and a man, were hit and died right in front of me, laying side by side like that. I just ran for my life. This was the very first time that I was very frightened. I have never witnessed people shooting one another, not right in front of my very eyes, no. That was the only time that I witnessed such an account.

At the end of 1980, I don't quite recall which month though, the Vietnamese attacked Nong Chan and Nong Samit. The authorities learned about the attack that night that . . . . I was very worried. I could not sleep. I did not put up a mosquito net either. I was packing up our belongings. I was thinking that the only way for me to do was flee. I would cross the border over to the Thai territory if something happened. The Thais opened the gate for us to get in. But, I didn't really know what happened that night. I only heard the shells pounding, and I ran into the place. We were walking back and forth all around the house. In the morning, we realized that we stayed around our hut. We didn't really go anywhere at all. We got lost all around, and we were stepping on this and that, but we were still inside the hut. I really didn't know what happened, but we got lost, that was all I knew. At that time, the man who gave me 100 bahts stayed with us too. His wife was pregnant. There was another lady who also stayed with us. Her child was a cripple and could not walk. She had to carry him/her and ran. I had an idea, so I took along some rice and some dried goods, in case we got to a place and needed food. When we were crossing the road and got to a trail leading into a forest, we saw a huge mine. I told them not to step on it, and not to

proceed. If they traveled on, they would be at risk right away. The lady turned back. When we went back, we stayed in. She followed me and we met the Vietnamese soldiers who were winding the telephone wires. Actually, we did not know where they dug up the ground at all. They did not go straight and attacked the Thais through Thai villages. They would dig up a ditch. There was a hill with a creek at each side, and there were some trails. They hid around the area. It was night time, and we had no idea, so we went back. I did not reach that area yet. My brother who went to California went to that place and saw the Vietnamese soldiers so he came back. Actually, the Vietnamese soldiers attacked the villages and placed themselves like a buffalo's horns. They attacked the Thai villages, you know. All the villages in the area were all burned. At that time, a Thai helicopter was down because the Vietnamese troops shot it down. At that time, I was very frightened. I lost all my senses. When I went to stay in the new camp, there were people at this camp who would take the people who used to live at the old camp and kill them all over again. If we had a lot of money, they would rob us and take us away to be killed.

Q. What factions did the people in the old and new camps belong to?

A. They were all Cambodians you know. I don't know what factions they belonged to. The Para soldiers might be at the old camp, I don't really know. Politics give me a headache. This is the reason I said that I don't have any faith in anybody; everybody in the camps is a thief. That was the reason why I went to that place, and we heard some people say this. My mother was separated from my younger brother. She refused to go along with him us. I said: "Mother, even if you refuse to go, I have to leave. I will not change my mind again." This was what I said. I would not risk my life and stayed around the area which was being shelled like this any more. I was very frightened. I was sure I would not live very long. My mother then . . . my younger brother, Sorn, did not say anything at all, but I had a very good idea. It would be better if I wore patchy clothes; this would be better for me. At the end, I packed our good clothes in a plastic bag. I also had an old salt bag. I sewed patches on it, and hid the money and some gold inside these patches and gave the bag to my brother to hold. I didn't carry anything at all, except for a hand bag, flash light, and some clothes any my child's. The people told me not to at the camps. They told the guide not to rob the people any more. We pitched in the money to pay the guide. Each of us paid 200 Bahts for the guide to take us to the camp. He robbed us. I was lucky because I was making a living my own sweat, and I never robbed anybody. He did not get anything from me at all because our group was pushed ahead, and we had to cross the water. My brother, Heng, was following us. We were walking along the rice field dikes. He could not see anything when it was night time in the condition is called chicken blind and while walking, he fell off the dikes and his clothes were all dirty. The guide said: "Gee, you were noisy; be quite, walk quietly." When we got to the



Thai villages, the Thais said: "*Diev korn, diev korn* (wait a minute)." My brother heard: "*Diev korn*," and just grabbed my younger brother, Peou, and the three of them, Hen, Khon, and Peou fled and vanished and I had no idea where they went to. The three of us stayed behind my mother, my child, and me. The rest of the family vanished. The Thais could speak some Cambodian and asked us: "Do you have some gold?" I told them that I have no gold, and that I fled my country to go to the camp, when they searched me, they realized that I was a real refugee.

When they seared us, one of them intended to carry my child away. So I said: "Go ahead and carry my child away; she was half naked." I did not care, I didn't put any valuable things for them to see. When they found nothing on my child, they put her down. We went into the camp. When I went to the Khao I Dang camp, I lost my brother. My mother cried and said: "I am going back. I rather die on my way back home. Let them kill me." The next morning, some people looked for my three brothers and found them. We went to live with my sister who was married and who lived at the quarter #2. I had my tracing card made for us and paid 1,000 bahts for it. I still had over 10,000 bahts left. I still had over three to four damleungs of gold a couple of ounces, and I said nothing to anybody. I stayed in that camp for a month before my brother came over. When he got there, he got sick. After one month, I was walking around the camp and met some acquaintances. They said they would share some fish with me. At the time, I didn't have enough to feed us all either. I didn't say anything and kept quiet. I didn't buy anything either, and I said nothing. I just kept the money for the time being. I stayed at Khao I Dang for exactly one month. We were supposed to be divided and went to the Kap Cheun camp. I thought that we were taken away to be killed. Seven days before we left, there were robberies again. They knew about those of us who sold gold. Talking about a Chinese, he sold gold and he stayed near us. He was frightened and was walking the floor. He got accepted to come to the U.S., but he was not ready yet. He was frightened at the camp.

- Q. What other camps did you stay besides the Khao I Dang camp?
- A. After we left Khao I Dang camp, we went to stay in the Kap Cheun camp. In Kap Cheun camp, the huts are in better condition than at the Khao I Dang camp. The Thai people had some merchandises to sell. For example, when we got a ration of beans and we didn't eat them, we could then exchange them for fish or merchandise, and they would exchange them with us. At the Kap Cheun camp, the people asked me whether or not I could crochet or knit a blouse. There was a Cambodian who used to be a teacher, teaching knitting and crocheting making sweaters and she could crochet beautiful sweaters. She asked me if I could crochet. I told her that I could crochet something, but I didn't know any stitches. I only know basic stitches. She told me that she could teach me some designs since I already knew some basic stitches. I learned how to knit socks, hats and blouses. When I knew how to knit and crochet blouses, I was given 250 baths a

month, in merchandises, such as food, like fish sauce, duck eggs, etc . . . I stayed there for five months before my name was on the list for going to the camp. Then I was sent to stay at the transit place. At the time, I had to spend money and everything that I owned. I had to spend them buying things and food for my mother so that she could eat tasty foods, you know. I had to spend the money for about one month before I went to stay at the transit place. My family and I had to take the plane to the Philippines. After we landed, we got on a bus where we were given sweets, etc . . . we were sent to stay at Bata Am. I closed my eyes and did not dare look out. The next morning, the bus was going up and down and winding around the mountain. I looked down and saw a deep ravine and I didn't dare look. I always closed my eyes; I was very scared when I looked, oh, no, I could not look. It looked dangerous and life threatening. I was very scared. I didn't dare look out. I closed my eyes all the way to Bata Am. It was a beautiful place. When I first got there, I was car sick; all of us were car sick. When we got there, we slept and were weak. We were given houses to live in. There they had tap water for us to take a shower in the mornings and evenings. In the morning, we had the water for showers from seven to nine in the morning, and from four to six in the evening, for two hours. There was a time for us to use the tap water. When we had no tap water, then we could take a bath at the water fall, you know. But it was a little far away. The water fall was beautiful and it was a lot of fun. We went up the mountain and the water was falling. It was a beautiful sight and it was cool.

Q. How long did you stay in the Philippines?

A. They wanted us to study there for five months. On Mondays, they gave us some fish. There were two kinds of fish. There were like the *Pruol* fish. They gave us pork, chicken on Saturdays. On Sundays, they gave us canned vegetables, canned food, *sou* fruits. They gave us fish twice a week, pork once a week, and the rest of the week chicken. Sometimes, they gave us *kathorn* or *kampenh rach* fruits for desserts. It was kind of fun living in the camps in the Philippines.

Q. How was life in these two camps?

A. I would say that life in the Philippines was easier. They gave us kerosene there. There was electricity for us all night throughout. When there was an earthquake, they would warn us about it and we would stop all the activities. One day, they told us there was a storm coming up. I was praying very hard. They told us about a place to stay. They didn't let us go to the open air because the trees might fall and injure us. One day, there were both a storm and an earthquake. They warned us that the storm would hit the refugee camps. I didn't know what happened but only the tail end of it hit the camps, and it turned to hit Manila, and the stone houses were all demolished. I don't know how many casualties there were. Oh,

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but I said to myself, I am spared. We were told that every time there was an earthquake, the papaya trees were uprooted. They made me learn English but I didn't learn anything. I could not even read alphabets. The trip by bus from Bata Am camp to Manila took 12 hours. We left in the morning, and we got there in the evening. When we got there, they didn't give us rice, they gave us bread. I said, oh no, they had nothing else to give us but bread. My mother made a pot of rice and brought it along because she was afraid we would have nothing to eat, my brother said: "How could you be so afraid that we would have nothing to eat? When we get there, they will give us some food to eat." She said: "Don't boss me around. I will make a pot of rice, and it will be alright." Well, we sure didn't get rice, thanks to her, we got to eat rice and the foods she made. They gave us a tiny bit of bread, how could I have enough to eat. When we boarded the plane, a Lao person vomited all the way until the plane landed. He/she stopped vomiting and when it flow, he/she started vomiting again. As for me, I vomited too until I got to the US. I had to stop in Tokyo then in Seattle. At the time, there was a plane crash due to a heavy snow storm. All of us were frightened. We were given coats and socks. I had no socks, only sandals. I arrived in Boston on January 15, 1982. When I got to Boston, in January, I saw big patches of snow and I thought they were some kinds of birds. We got here in the middle of the night. We were told that it was indeed the snow. I saw Mr. Yeng going to meet us. He asked me if I had any luggage, and I said that I had nothing, except for the two boxes and a bag. My first apartment was near by here. We did not lock the door at all. He came over and showed us how to turn on the gas stove. Because I was air sick and had a jet lag, whenever we turned on the stove to cook the food, I had a headache. I could not eat anything and I had no money. I was taken to "High Market." Oh, sister, I was freezing to death. I could hardly carry ten apples (laughs) . . . every time I talked about this, I wanted to laugh at myself; I was too dumb.

Q. Do you have any brother or sisters or relatives in the US?

A. At the time I did not. In the Philippines, they asked me where I wanted to resettle. They told me that it is quite cold in Boston, but there are many job opportunities. So I said, well then, I will go to Boston. I did not know anybody there. They told me that there weren't too many Cambodians there. My brother said: "Alright, I want to go to Boston. I don't want to go to California because there are too many Cambodians there even though it is warm."

Q. Are your brothers and sisters in Boston?

A. One of my brothers left because he had a wife. The other younger siblings are living here together. I have been living here since 1982 until now.

## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 8

Q. How is your life in the city of Boston? What are your intentions?

A. First, I thought: Oh, who in the world would be hiring me and give me a job? I don't know a word of English! I was made to go study English at the International School by subway. I didn't know where it was. They took me there to study with other Cambodians. They always showed me different places. My younger brothers Khon and Heng were intelligent and knew how to read English. They studied it at the camps. It was true that they did not speak English, but they could write it. They knew their way around; they were smart. As for me, where was I going? I could not even find the way to take my child to school or to the school bus. She had to go to school with other children. First, they wanted my child to go to school. They wanted me to go to a clinic and took me to the one in Brighton. After three or four times, I was then able to walk there by myself. My mother went there alone and she broke her arm because she fell in the snow. Nobody knew that she went to the clinic alone because I went to school. I learned about the accident from Rosa who then telephoned to me. The people knew about this mishap and felt sorry for her and took her home. One of my goals is to let my child go to school so she will be educated in the future. I don't want her to be illiterate. My younger siblings will be continuing their education to build a good future. As for me, I am old. I am not thinking about fame and fortune. I am only thinking about going to work and my social security benefits, which helps me when I retire. When I am able to go to work, I wonder how much they would pay me so that I could just take care of my child. I am not thinking about where I will be going from here on. I am only thinking about my child's and younger sibling's education.

Q. Are your younger siblings younger or older than you are?

A. My younger siblings are 23, 21 and 18 years old. My younger sister is 13 years old. This February, my child will be 12 years old. My oldest younger brother is over 30 years old.

Q. Do you have any plans for the next five years?

A. At the present time, my plan would be to work and save lots of money in the event that, you know, any younger siblings want to buy a house to share, and we will live in a compartment each. I don't know what else I want. I just work and save the money in case we get sick in the future. We can never predict this.

Q. In the new episode of your life in the US, what were the moments that made you

the happiest? *Was your life less than what you expected, right or wrong?*

A. I am talking about the period when I lived in Boston. I studied English for nine months. At the time, I was able to speak a little bit of English and understand some English. I then went to work part-time. I was making typewriter ribbons. They were huge. Two people could hardly lift it up. Every time we had to change the rolls, my hand was lacerated with the machine, so I quit. When I first went into the factory, my face looked alright, but one hour later, my whole face was black. After I worked there for five months, I went to inform the Welfare Department about my job. I didn't commit any fraud, so they cut my welfare. After awhile, I worked full-time, my welfare was cut, and I didn't appeal at all. Since I didn't have a health insurance, I quit my job and was on welfare again, and I went back to school. After I studied for four or five months, I told the teacher, a Cambodian, that I didn't get enough money to spend. I asked him to help look for a job for me, which could provide me with a health insurance. I got a job which paid me \$5.50 per hour and I worked there three years until the present time. The moments which made me the happiest were the times when I held religious ceremonies. I was happy to be together with my relatives, my acquaintances and friends from way back when. When I got a car, I was able to go to Washington, D.C., to Canada and meet my friends and to other states.

Q. What were the moments which made you feel most miserable in your new life?

A. After living here for a long time, I had a hard time getting used to the foods. Having lived here for a long time, I seemed like I had nothing to eat, and there was no good that tasted good any more. At first, I had a hard time in the winter when the snow fell; it was freezing. I didn't go out at all. I wanted to go back to Cambodia. Right now, I get used to it, and it is not too bad. Each time it snows, I don't like it.

Q. Do you have any plans for yourself?

A. I don't have any plans at all. Well, it is true, right now, I am not thinking about anything at all. I only think about going to stay at the pagoda when I reach old age.

Q. When you were in Cambodia, did you think about your life?

A. When I was young, I always thought about the future. But now, I get to the United States, now, and I am almost 40 years old, and I will be 40 in one more year. When I think about it, I say to myself, well, I am old now, I don't want to think about anything at all, or worry about anything. Well, you see, previously I had nothing at all, so now, I don't feel like wanting to make any money at all.

- Q. Do you feel that your life has been shattered, right or wrong?
- A. Well, it was like, I used to experience many kinds of events before this, then I witnessed them with my own eyes too, they became normal to me. I thought to myself, I would drop anything to earn the money and when I wanted to go somewhere, I just went. I just drove the car and went places, I didn't think about anything at all. In about two or three years, I will start thinking about looking for a house to buy and leave it to my child in the future.
- Q. You said that you have no goal for yourself. Do you feel that life has no meaning at all or what?
- A. I don't have any goal, except for working and buying a house, and seeing the children well provided for. I don't have any other intentions. Right now, I just pray to Buddha, and I always think about Buddha's *Dharma*. As long as they are Buddha's *Dharma*, I can always take them along with me when I die. I don't think about anything. I only think about accumulating merits by holding religious ceremonies. When I get money, I will travel and have fun, and spend the money. I don't think about anything in the long range.
- Q. If you were in Cambodia, do you think that you would be happier than you were here?
- A. If I were in our country, Cambodia, I would make some plans. I would plan for the future. Well, it is like, I would want to know about what kinds of goals I would have, what I would do, what profession would bring the most money, or what I could do to be someone in the future. But when I am here, I don't know what to do, except for working.
- Q. In Cambodia, how old are the Cambodian women supposed to be when they considered themselves as being old?
- A. When they are 40 years old and up, they are considered being old. Just like me, I will be 40 years old in a few days.
- Q. When women are 40 years old and over, they are considered as being old. What does this mean? Do the men stop loving them?
- A. In Cambodia, most women who are 40 or 45 years old and up, go to the pagoda.
- Q. In Cambodia, how old should the men be to be considered old?
- A. They are considered to be old when they die. Most women, when they are old,

they don't care about anything. A few of them still have fun. Most of them go to live at the pagoda, and they do not think so much about this aspect of life at all.

- Q. At the present time in the United States, how is your living? What do you live? Who are the persons who are doing with you? What is your present condition for way of support to your life?
- A. I live in building #10 \_\_\_ Avenue, Brighton. I live with my mother, my daughter Carol and my brother and sister. At the present time, I work at Harvard, where assembly line.
- Q. Where do your relatives live, for example, at the cities in Cambodia, and in the United States?
- A. I don't have any blood brother or sister. I only have some cousins. They live in Phnom Penh, in Treang, in Battambang, in Bantei Meanchey, and Phnom Penh. I have a sister living in Atlanta, and a brother living in California.
- Q. How is your life in the United States?
- A. My life nowadays, well, I work to support my mother and my daughter. Sometimes I would work as far as some money to support my mother and my daughter, to help with the life of those who live in Cambodia. I don't know how they can live over there. My strategies are just money for my living. My life is just normal. I live in the United States right now, and I miss my country since I have been away. I am a bit at home. I miss my relatives. I also worry about them, since I don't know how they are doing. In the United States, we work all hours, all the time. I work over here, I work over there.
- Q. Did you send money to Cambodia very often?
- A. I sent money via wire transfer. I don't know how much I sent each time, but I do.
- Q. Do you have many relatives in Cambodia?
- A. I have four of my mother's older siblings. They are all her older sisters. They are my older aunts. They are quite old now. Most of them are dead. I have my aunts, all of her children died, you know. I have not heard any news about my relatives from my father's side. I only heard some news from my mother's side.
- Q. When you were in Cambodia, how could you get to the city?



## INTERVIEW 5 - PART 9

- Q. At the present time in the United States, how is your living? Where do you live? Who are the persons who are living with you? What is your profession for way of support to your life?
- A. I live in building #10 \_\_\_ Avenue, Brighton. I live with my mother, my daughter Carol and my brothers and sisters. At the present time, I work at Newton, in the assembly line.
- Q. Where do your relatives live, for example, at the camps, in Cambodia, and in the United States?
- A. I don't have any blood brother or sister. I only have some cousins. They live in Phnom Penh, in Traeng, in Battambang, in Bantei Daek near Phnom Penh. I have a sister living in Allston, and a brother living in California.
- Q. How is your life in the United States?
- A. My life nowadays, well, I work to support my daughter so she can go to school. Sometimes, I would work so to save some money to send to Cambodia to help my relatives, to help with the life of those who live in Cambodia, since I don't really know how they can live over there. My earnings are just enough for my living. My life is just normal. I live in the United States right now, and I miss my country since I have been away from it for awhile. I also miss my relatives. I also worry about them, since I don't know how they are doing. In the United States, we work all hours, all the time. Work over here is not so easy.
- Q. Did you send money to Cambodia very often?
- A. I sent money once or twice a year, but I would send thousand of dollars each time too.
- Q. Do you have many relatives in Cambodia?
- A. I have four of my mother's older siblings. They are all her blood sisters. They are my older aunts. They are quite old now. Many of their children died. One of my aunts, all of her children died, you know. I have not heard any news about my relatives from my father's side. I only heard some news about my mother's side.
- Q. When you were in Cambodia, how close were you to them?

- A. I was not too close to them. But my mother was particularly close to them. My mother respects them very much. She respects her sisters. At the time, I was grown up. I was busy making a living. I only visited them once in awhile. The did not live with us. My mother lived with them. My aunts helped to raise her sisters. My grandmother passed away and left my mother since she was young. My aunt raised my mother up.
- Q. In your family, were you the only one who worked to raise the family? Did you feel you bore the whole load of providing for the family?
- A. Yes, most of the burden fell on me, it was true. My mother retired, and all my younger siblings were in school.
- Q. How many hours did you work a week?
- A. It all depends. Sometimes I worked fifty hours. But I only had one job.
- Q. What did you do?
- A. I hade gadgets to test pregnant women. I worked at the laboratory for pregnant women.
- Q. Did you like that job?
- A. It was all right.
- Q. In the next three or four years what plans do you have for your family?
- A. I don't want very much. All I want is a house, a roof over my head. I want to work to save enough money to send my daughter to college. When all of those wishes were accomplished, I would be happy.
- Q. Do you have any objectives for yourself?
- A. I am not worried about anything. The only thing I think about is to go live in the pagoda when I get old. I am not worried about anything else at all.
- Q. What do you want to do to make yourself happy?
- A. Right now, I don't want to do anything. I only want to work to get enough money to support myself, for my brothers and sister, and my child. I don't think about anything at all. When I get old, I only want to have enough money saved for my future, for the time of my death. That is all that I want. I don't want anything

now.

- Q. What do you want for yourself, for instance getting married again, going to the beach . . . ?
- A. Gosh! I don't want to go the beach. I don't want to get married again. This is enough.
- Q. Why don't you want to get married again? It is because there are not any good and nice Cambodian men?
- A. They are all right. Some of them are good, and some are bad. They are normal men. But I don't seem to think about this matter at all.
- Q. Why don't you want to get married even though you meet a nice man? What is the reason?
- A. Because I don't have any more feeling about this matter.
- Q. Was there anybody who asked for your hand in marriage?
- A. Of course there was, but I considered him as a friend.
- Q. Your happiness comes from your caring for your daughter and your younger siblings, right, and religion? Was there anything else that makes you happy?
- A. I serve the purpose of helping my child and my younger siblings to finish school, and get jobs, and get married. When they are well, I am happy. I am happy to go to the pagoda.
- Q. During Pol Pot regime, have you ever thought that you might die, or have you ever thought that you were in great danger at all?
- A. During Pol Pot regime, I thought that I didn't really know when I was going to die. I didn't know when they would take me away and kill me at all. I didn't know what offense I might have had. We were not able to be aware of our own offenses.
- Q. In that regime, have you ever thought that you could not be your own master?
- A. How could we be our own master when we had nothing at all?
- Q. How did you feel about the fact that you could not be your own master?

- A. In my mind, I felt, depressed. There was too much oppression, and our life was difficult. If we lived, it . . . If we had a job to do like we did previously, even if we encountered any difficulty, at least we made some money, and we were able to save some property, however, few they might be, we could gather them for our children. In Pol Pot regime, whatever belongings we had, we had to put it in the commune, we worked in the commune, everything was collective. We worked ourselves to death, and they said that we, you know, I don't have to tell you, they said that we were sick. If we were sick, they said that we were hypochondriac.
- Q. Did you feel that your life was surreal, and different? Did you feel that it was a nightmare?
- A. That was an illusion, it was like a bad dream, an unusual dream. I thought in my mind, "Why does it happen the way it does? Our life was so peaceful, but why suddenly, there was a change, and there were killings and bloodshed?" When I think about it, it was quite scary. In my whole life, since the day I was born, I have not seen anything like it.
- Q. In the communist regime, did you ever experience a feeling that you could not think about anything at all, and that you had a temporary black out?
- A. Sometimes I thought, "Well, it is so difficult, may I should die, since it is more difficult to be alive." I didn't want to care about being lazy, about having to figure out something. If, for example, if we wanted to cross the border . . . I wanted to escape so that I would die. I wanted to follow my friend. I wanted to escape so many times. I said, I should escape. If they catch up with me, let them shoot me and kill me and let it be. Just one bullet would kill me dead, so that I didn't have to live and lead a miserable life.
- Q. In that regime, they would tell you that you did something, but did you ever feel that you could not remember what it was that you did?
- A. I did many things, I had written a fake letter, I forged a signature. There wasn't any time when I did not remember my own action. When I did something, I usually remember. During Pol Pot regime, sometimes, I thought, if I didn't escape, I would die, therefore, I wanted to escape. I would die if I escaped, and I would die if I stayed. If they sent me somewhere far away, I would have been separated from my brothers and sisters. Therefore, the only thing for me to do was to leave. My colleagues led one another to leave, but I didn't leave.
- Q. In Pol Pot regime, you were working, but your mind and your senses were gone. Did you have this kind of feeling happen to you?

- A. It did happen, of course it did not fail to happen. For example, in my mind, I was transplanting rice seedlings. I was not used to transplanting rice seedlings. I did not know what rice stalks looked like. Well, it was like, they made us do things that we did not like to do. This is difficult to do a comparison. For example, I was transplanting rice seedlings, but my mind was thinking about how my future will be, and not about transplanting rice seedlings.
- Q. Did this hard labor bother you, and make you feel fed up?
- A. I did a lot of thinking. I was feeling sorry for my child who was born and was so innocent. The reason for me to live now is because of my child.
- Q. In Pol Pot regime, did you have any ways to help your mind cope with hardship?
- A. I could not make my mind serene.
- Q. Have you had a feeling that you could divide yourself into two parts, and these two parts monitored each other?
- A. I had that feeling. Sometimes I thought, "I did the labor, but how did the militia see me work wise? What did the militia think of me? Will the militia take me away and kill me? When will they take me away?" For example, if I were able to divide myself, I wanted to ask the Khmer Rouge, "Why are you doing what you are doing?" Those were the only feelings I had. I had no other feelings.
- Q. In Khmer Rouge regime, what trades did you have to help you survive and endure such hardships?
- A. In order to survive and support the children, we had to be able to grow vegetables to sustain our lives, because in Pol Pot regime, I went from one place to another place. I wrote a fake letter. I must act as if I were illiterate. If I acted as if I could read and write, I would be doomed. I must act as if I was an ignorant person. In Pol Pot regime, circumstances made me a liar, and tell lies. That is to say, I must do anything to stay alive. The only thing I didn't do was not to violate other people's rights. I must do anything to stay alive. I must pretend that I saw no evil. I did not let them know that I was a normal person. I was accused of being a Vietnamese.
- Q. In that regime, you did a hard labor, and your body was subjected to such hardship. What did you do to alleviate such suffering?
- A. Sometimes I suffered very much, but I could not solve this problem. I had an idea, I said, "I am thinking about Buddhism. I took Buddha's *Dharmas*, his

teachings and reflected on them. I thought that if I did good deeds in my past life, may I live on; if I did just enough good deeds to live up to that time, then there was nothing else I could do. It was up to the *Karma*, and the merits which I have accumulated.

Q. Do you think that you have merits or bad *Karma*?

A. I think I did good deeds, and that whatever happens to me I will be all right. This is what I think. If I did not do nay good deed, then I must act accordingly. This is what I think. think that, I have done good deeds in my previous life, and I should have a long life.

Q. If you compare your life in the United States to the one you led before the Pol Pot regime, is your way of living in this present time a good one or not?

A. My life in Cambodia was better than living here. It was not so hard.

Q. So then your present life has some difficulties?

A. Well, let me say that, it is difficult in the matter of . . . it is not too difficult, but it is not so easy either. When I look around, I see many houses, many things, and many cars. When I look around, nothing is calm. For example, when it is hot, it is quite hot, and it snows too, and everything else. In Cambodia, for example, when it is hot, and when the breeze blows, we get relief. Oh gee, nowadays, the Cambodian women are so different, and I don't know what to say. The young people nowadays are a mess. I don't know how they will turn out to be in the future.

Q. What kind of concerns do you have for the children in the next generation?

A. I am concerned about them. We are determined to send them to school, and we are afraid that they might do something wrong. They have relationships with some friends who use heroin, or other drugs. You know, we as parents, we are concerned and worried about our relatives, and our nephews and nieces. We worry about both the girls and the boys, whether it was a boy or a girl, that does not matter though. It might be a little better off if they were more mature. If they were still minors, then it makes matters worse. We can't predict what will happen. We can't scold them too much either. In this country, we cannot follow them to school and take care of them there at all. When the teachers send us their report cards, we can't say anything to them. It is unwise to scold them too much. So, you see, we are concerned about everything. But, my daughter has not encountered any such problem. In the future, the children, just like the children in the present day life, the majority of them do not listen to their parents. They

consider themselves as an authority.

- Q. Do you know if any of our Cambodian children use drugs?
- A. No. I heard an elderly person living in Revere talk about this boy. He is twelve years old; he disappeared for a couple of days. When he got back, he ran and hid from his parents when he saw them. He was afraid that they would punish him. And, you know, he was such a good boy. He respected his parents like anything. Suddenly, unexpectedly, he became a mess. He became disoriented, and lost. He became a boy who knew how to steal, to pickpocket people.
- Q. Are you concerned about young girls? I mean if you are concerned about them being pregnant before marriage?
- A. Talking about it, in my generation, we weren't doing this, but now, you know, I don't know much about life in Cambodia.
- Q. In the United States, are there more fights or violence among poor Cambodian people than in Cambodia?
- A. I have not experienced that, but I have heard of it. For example, an elderly person's daughter had a platinum necklace on. Actually she did not wear much jewelry at all. After she got off the car, suddenly he jerked the necklace and injured her neck. He got only half of the necklace and the other half was left, you know. The mugger was a Cambodian and he was only a minor. The Cambodian was the driver, and the Vietnamese was the mugger.
- Q. How did you know one was a Cambodian and the other one was a Vietnamese?
- A. People know them very well indeed. They have stolen property from some people in the past. Some parents defended their children.
- Q. Is there more violence in this community than in Cambodia?
- A. Yes, there is more violence here.
- Q. Why is there so much violence?
- A. In my opinion, this is because we used to live in Cambodia, and our customs are different from the ones here. In the United States, we would teach our children to be good, but they have their own crazy ideas. The teachers teach them to be a good person, to try to study hard, to recognize bad stuff from good stuff, but it is the people who practice crazy ideas. This is my opinion, you know. I don't have

any other ideas. I said, "What are the reasons behind this action?" I was looking for those reasons. I didn't know what to do. You know the teachers? Well, they taught those children to be good; they never taught them to be bad, but I don't really know why they have crazy ideas.

Q. So then you believe that you don't know the reasons why there are more problems in the United States than in Cambodia, is that right?

A. That's right.

Q. How old is your daughter?

A. Neang is fourteen years old.

Q. Doesn't Neang bring you problems?

A. Neang has no problem.

Q. What grade is Neang in?

A. Neang is in the eighth grade. When school starts after the vacation, Neang will attend Brighton High School.

Q. Does she make good grades?

A. She does not make good grades, but the grades are okay.

Q. Are you worried about your daughter going to high school?

A. I kind of worry, yes. But I try to counsel her with sweet words, for her to study hard, and I try to encourage her.

Q. Are the Cambodian children here attending Catholic schools?

A. I don't know. I am worried to death about my young nephews. They are my younger sister's children. They associate with bad children. I told them not to go out with them. I don't want them to go out with bad children. I really try to counsel them. You know, when they are young, I just try to counsel them. If I wait until they are older to counsel them, I will have problems. I don't worry too much about my daughter, because Neang's quite mature.