

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 1

- Q. Grandma, in what village, town and province were you born?
- A. Excuse me, greetings to . . . I lived in the countryside, in the farms, around the marketplace *Ang Rokar*, the village was nearby, *Tram Kak* town, and *Takeo* province.
- Q. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- A. My older siblings, my oldest sibling is *Oy, Phneu*, the next one is *Chhun*, and the next one is *Seng*. All my older siblings are boys. All of them were monks. *Chhun* was not a monk. He took a wife when he was young. Brother *Phneu* was a monk, so were brother *Seng*, brother *Sann*, brother *Keo*, and brother *Khom*, and next in line is me, of course; I am the youngest child, and the last one.
- Q. What did your parents do?
- A. My father was a farmer; my mother took care of the rice seedling transplants. When the transplanting season arrived, we all transplanted the seedlings. During the cool season, he grew vegetables, that was about all he did for a living; I didn't notice that he did anything else. The harvest's yield depended on the rainy seasons. When there was plenty of rain, then we had a good harvest, when it was a drought, then we would just have enough. We were not exactly wealthy people; we were middle class people, my parents I mean.
- Q. Please elaborate about your life and your parents' profession.
- A. All my older brothers lived at the pagoda; they did not live at home. They were monks; they only got married when they got older. Those who were married were: brother *Phneu*, brother *Chhun*, brother *Sann*, only these three were married. My brother *Seng* was dead while still a monk. Brother *Keo* was separated from us. Now, he is still a monk, and I don't know where he is living now. That is brother *Keo*, he has not left the monk hood yet. My brothers did not do anything; all my brothers died. There is only one brother left. They are all separated from me.
- Q. How old were your brothers when they entered the monk hood?
- A. When I was old enough to know right from wrong, I just saw that my older brothers were monks, yes monks. When I was old enough, I was still the youngest, and I just saw that my brothers were monks, and that they came home, and went to the pagoda. They were ordained at the *Ang Roka* pagoda; my brothers

Seng, Sann, and Keo were ordained at the *Chey Chrum* pagoda.

Q. What did your parents do for a living? Did they have enough money to raise their children?

A. Their profession, I only saw that they did farming. We lived off their farms, and we did not have any other profession. They farmed during the farming season, and they did vegetable gardening during the cool seasons, that was all. As for the vegetable gardening, it only provided us with enough to live on. We did not lack so much money, but then, we did not have too much money to save either, it was just enough for us people living in the farm in the rural area. As for the vegetable gardens, they planted: kapok, papaya, lime trees, things like beans, some corns, watermelons and pumpkins. They grew mixed vegetables. The vegetable gardens in the rural areas are not similar to those near the river. The gardens in the upper land just provided us with enough production to live on; it was just enough for us. We were not able to see the product or anything like that. It was just enough for us to eat.

Q. Was the farm land in *Takeo* province good for growing vegetables and yielding a good harvest?

A. In my area, the farmland does not yield a very good harvest; we did not have too many big hills to grow anything, the hills were small, and there were not too many of them either. There were small hills where we could tie three or four pairs of oxen to graze; there were not too many of them. This depends on the area; some have big hills, while some others have small ones. The gardens were around the forests at the foot of the mountains, right in front of Peak *BangKang* mountain, and *Mek Romeal* mountain. My gardens were in front of these mountains. We cleared them to the front of those mountains, in the forest, called *Trapaeng Krang* forest. We cleared up the forest and grew the vegetables. Other people were doing the same thing. We Cambodians did not have so much money left over; we just had enough. There were those who had some money, those who were in a better status than we were. We were only in the middle class; my parents were not rich. They only made enough to feed us. We were not too poor. There were times when we did not have anything, and there were those times when we had enough too.

Q. What did your parents do every time they did not make any money?

A. For example, when the farm did not yield a good harvest, the vegetable gardens would help compensate for that. There were sweet potatoes, corns and beans, and these would help, and we would be able to live; we were not able to sell them and make a profit. They helped us to make ends meet. Every time we had no rice, all of us would eat sweet potatoes. This was when we lacked food, you know. For

example, what did we need, well, like our rice was about to run out, we did not have enough rice. We could estimate and see that it was not enough; so my parents grew potatoes, such as tapioca plants, sweet potatoes, and corn, therefore, we had just enough, just enough and they did help too.

Q. How close were your parents to you?

A. Oh, my parents? They never talked much. Ever since I was born from my mother's womb, I have never heard my mother curse anyone, no. As for me, I did not do that either; I never did that, never. I never cursed anyone. I have never heard my parents quarrel, never. They may have quarreled somewhere else when I couldn't hear them, where it was quiet, I would not know because I was young; I did not know about everything. My mother passed away when I was about 13 or 14 years old.

Q. What kind of illness did your mother die of?

A. She went to sew the monk's robes; she collapsed and died. She was not ill. She was walking, or rather sitting, I don't really remember, I don't know what she was doing; the relatives had to go and bring her home from the place where she sat. She collapsed; her body was all limp, and she passed away. We took care of her for awhile, but it did not do anything to help her, so, she passed away. She was not ill.

Q. When did your father pass away? After your mother's death, how was your family's life? Did your father marry another wife?

A. My father married me off; he died afterwards. Yes he did, he had a second wife. We lived with his second wife; she didn't mistreat me. After my mother was passed away for 3 or 4 years, my father took another wife. Both of them were in their old age; they did not have any other children. At that time, I lived with my stepmother.

Q. How was life between the children from a previous marriage and the stepmother?

A. There was never a rift between the children from the previous marriage and the stepmother. She would call us "my children;" she never called us by any other names. My stepmother was very easy to get along with. At the time, she too was farming the land. She was transplanting rice seedlings. She had 5 children of her own, 2 daughters and 3 sons.

Q. Was there any quarrel between the children from the first and the second marriages?

- A. There was none. They were all married when my father married my stepmother, her children were all married. They lived in separate houses, and had a profession in far away towns. My father farmed the land all his life.
- Q. Did you ever attend any school at all?
- A. My brothers studied at the pagoda. They did not attend public school. But then, they may have attended public schools, or learned the alphabets at the pagoda. I wouldn't know, because I was still quite young. I only saw that they stayed at the pagoda; I didn't really know. As for me, I did not go to school. I didn't attend any school when I stayed with my parents; then I didn't have a mother; when I lived with my mother, I didn't get to go to school like everyone else. She did not put me in school.
- Q. She did not send you, who was a girl, to any school. Do you know why she did this?
- A. I don't know why she did this. At the time, all my brothers were ordained. I was still young, so I was keeping the nest like a hen, you know. My parents went to tend the vegetable garden, so I stayed home alone. I don't know why she did that. I was about 14 years old and my brothers were all ordained; all four of my brothers were ordained. One of them got married, and stayed in his house. My oldest brother was ordained until he was quite old; brother Phneu was a monk until he was old before he took a wife. My oldest brother got married when I was about . . . I was already married, and I already had a child. I cannot guess how old he was, but he was somewhat old; he was about in his 30's, I guess. He was the only one whose wedding I witnessed. I got to go to his wedding. I was not informed about the one brother who got married. I didn't know about his wedding. I didn't know when he got married; I just saw that he had a wife. My mother said: "We are going to the wedding." I was too young then. He got married because, you see, he was never ordained. My mother said that he got married when he was about 18 or 19 years old. He just went somewhere and got married. I was not informed about it.
- Q. Were your parents Buddhists or not?
- A. Yes, they were Buddhists. I didn't really know about the routine since I was still quite young. I always saw that every new year, they went to the pagoda. I went along with them and when the *Phcum Ben* (Ancestor Day, like Memorial Day) arrived they went to the pagoda, and I would go along with them. I also went to the pagoda with them on the Buddhist worship day. I didn't know how they worshipped, because I was not quite grown yet, and you know, I forgot about it; well, this was when I was still young.

- Q. When you were grown, what did they do every time they went to the pagoda?
- A. When they went to the pagoda, they took rice and some soup to offer to the monks in the Buddhist ceremonies just like everybody else. The monks and the *Acha* then would convey the merits through prayers. There were also the four requisites of the monks: such as the candles, and the joss sticks, etc. . . . I didn't see anything else.
- Q. What is the *Phcum Ben* ceremony?
- A. I am not an educated person, so I cannot give you an elaborate answer. This is only my opinion, you know, it is not from a reliable source or any custom manual; please excuse me. I will tell you according to my own opinion, and the fact. My understanding is that probably my grandmother and my grandfather were deceased and my mother took some food to the pagoda, offered it to the monks who in turn performed a religious ceremony to convey the merits to the deceased, either to help release them from sins, or to help promote a better life in the after life, to offer to them food to eat. Since the grandparents could not eat the food, my mother offered it to the monks, so that her parents could eat it, I guess. I think this is the only ceremony of the *Phcum Ben* I guess. Therefore, this means that during the *Phcum Ben* ceremony, people held religious ceremonies in order to commemorate the soul's of their grandparents, parents and relatives who passed away to the other world. I don't know how to answer your questions too well.
- Q. How was your life as a child, grandma?
- A. Well, when I was still living with my parents at the time, my mother passed away. When I was living with my mother, my life was all right; and I did not have too many problems; it was not so bad a life. When I lived with my stepmother, my life was not all right. I lived with my stepmother for about 3 years, yet, I lived with her for many years, until I was 19 years old when I got married. I lived with my stepmother ever since I was 14 years old. My mother passed away for 4 years, and my father took a second wife. He took a second wife for 4 years, and I lived with them until I was 19 years old when I was separated from my stepmother. I was 19 years old, and she married me off. When I got married, I lived separately near Phnom Penh city. I lived in *Korng Peesei* town, *Kampong Speu* province.
- Q. What do these sentences mean: it was not such a bad life with my mother; it was not such a bad life with my stepmother?
- A. When I lived with my mother, I didn't have to do anything stressful. I did not have such fun either; it was a normal life; it was not fun, but it was not a miserable life either. When I said it was not such a bad life, I meant it was not a difficult life, and it was not such a fun life either. This meant that, when I lived

with her, I had to pound rice; it was not a mortar and pestle which we could use our feet to push, rather, I had to use my hands to pound the rice. In the farm, we pounded rice with our hands. Once in awhile, we used our feet to do it. This was our trade. I did not go anywhere far at all. I only stayed at home. This was my life with my mother. I didn't go anywhere far away from home. I only went out to nearby villages. I never went to any villages which were far away from mine. I never went out to have fun. That was my life; I had nothing unusual about my life.

Q. When were you the happiest? What were the happiest moments in your childhood life which are unforgettable?

A. In the farm, I don't see anything that made me happy. I didn't go to see the movies or play like other people. I was not educated, so I didn't go to see them. I didn't go to see the movies or the plays. In the countryside, every time there was some kind of festivals, people showed movies and had plays. I didn't get to go and see them like everyone else; and I was not like . . . to say that I was having a lot of, I cannot tell you that either, because my life was just normal, that is all. What fun was there to have, you see? There was only the time when we We did things in our own home, that was fun, and we just made our living, that was normal.

Q. When you were young, what household chores did you have to do?

A. I wove the *Kramars* (checkered scarves made of cotton and silk), you know; sometimes I wove silk materials. My stepmother setup the weaving for me to do; sometimes I wove cotton *Kramars*. I did this before I got married. At that time, I was very happy to perform this job.

Q. When you were young, did you ever have any worries or did you suffer about anything?

A. When I was young, I never had to think about anything. I depended on my parents; I didn't think about anything at all. Sometimes I noticed that they had some worries, so I worried along with them. When they had worries and were unhappy, I helped them by worrying too. When I saw that my parents had problems, I would be unhappy just like them. When they were happy, I was happy too just like them. I didn't have so many worries since I was young. I don't know what I had to worry about, you know, since I was young. I saw my parents' mood and I reacted accordingly; therefore, it was just that it was not . . . oh well, you probably know that in Cambodia, life was not all that extraordinary, it was just normal. It was not too bad, and it was not too good; it was just normal.

Q. Did you ever experience any food shortage?

A. In the farm, the food there, well, I saw my parents get it for consumption, and I

don't really know where they got it from; it was not abundant; it was just enough for us. The food there was not abundant as it is over here. Here, we have plenty of food; in Cambodia, there wasn't a lot of food. At the markets, there is a lot of food. But my parents had no cabinet to store the food; we did not lack food.

Q. When you were young, did your parents ever teach you about Buddhism?

A. They told me: "Child, do good deeds; don't do bad deeds." This was what they told me. They said: "Child, try to adhere to the Buddhist principles; try to do good deeds; don't do bad deeds, child. Don't do anything that is bad; try to avoid it." I don't dare do anything that is bad; I don't dare do it. I had not . . . I am afraid to do bad deeds, you know. Bad deeds mean various actions, such as catching crabs, I didn't dare do this, I didn't dare catch fish. This means killing them, you know; I don't dare do it. I don't dare steal people's property.

Q. Did your parents ever teach you how to read and write?

A. No. My mother did not read or write. My father knew how to read and write, but he did not teach me.

Q. Why didn't your father teach you how to read and write?

A. I don't really know why.

Q. Do you want to learn to read write?

A. I have always wanted to do it. I am very sorry about this. If I had learned to write and read while I was young, I might know how to do it, how to read like other people. I don't know how to read the streets names, and tell where they are, or talk about any events.

Q. Can you read the Cambodian alphabet?

A. I can read some Cambodian. We were told to learn Cambodian during the literacy campaign, when Prince *Sihanouk* made us learn the Cambodian alphabet, and at the time I had already had some children. I studied for awhile, but I could not read.

Q. What other guidance did your mother give you?

A. She did not make me do anything. She had me do normal tasks, do household chores, which were not much, just minimal things. She could not send me to a far away errands because I was young. She only had me take care of water, like in the morning, I would boil water and keep it for her to drink and make porridge; she

did not make me do many chores, like making rice. I went out and took a stroll. My mother made rice; she never had me do anything much. She did not because I did not know how to do those chores. I couldn't make rice.

Q. How old were you then?

A. I was 14 years old, but I could not make rice; it was not done, you know. I couldn't build the fire for the rice. In Cambodia, the firewood was not good. When I blew at them to make fire, they were smoky. I couldn't make fire with them; I blew at them, but they didn't ignite, and the smoke got in my eyes.

Q. How old were you when you learned how to make rice?

A. When I was 15 or 16 years old.

Q. If you didn't learn to make rice and to cook well, how can you have a comfortable life?

A. Later on when I was 15 or 16 years old, my father made me cook rice; he taught me how to do it.

Q. Right now, are you good at cooking food?

A. I am not very good at it at all. I don't know how. I would say that I don't know how to cook. All I know is to put the *prahok* (salted preserved fish) in the soup; I don't know how to cook. When I was young, I made rice, and it was burned, the whole pot of rice was burned. We even had to throw away the pot. I could make rice and the smoke would bellow, blue smoke. I would have to throw away the pot. I didn't cook the rice until it was done, until I was 16 years old. My father taught me how to do the chores, and to do household chores to make the house look nice, not to be extravagant, to be thrifty and to put things in their own places. When the guests came to visit us from other villages, I would have to know how to cook for them. This was what my father taught me.

Q. So then you had a closer relationship with your father than with your mother, right?

A. Yes, I was closer to my father than my mother because my mother passed away and I was young. My father was my guidance, and counselor; he taught me how to arrange the furniture in the house, how to make rice, and to cook for him, to join my palms in respect and offer food to him, and he would eat it; when the guests come, I would make food and boil water for them, and sometimes I would only make tea. After drinking tea, they would leave, some other times, they would eat and then they left. Besides this, I didn't know how to do anything else.

I only knew how to do household chores. He went out to make a living; he went out to tend the cows and I stayed behind to take care of the house. He went out to work on the ground and put up the stakes for potatoes and I stayed home, that was all.

- Q. Where is your father now?
- A. My father passed away ever since I was 30 years old. I had a fever (???)
- Q. After your father passed away, how was your life grandma?
- A. I lived with my husband. I miss my father very much; he used to live with me and raised me up; now he is gone, and I miss him very much. He taught me many things, much more than my mother did. How could my mother have taught me anything when I was so young, and she passed away when I was small?
- Q. Do you have any memories or do you dream about your parents?
- A. Now, my brothers are married, they moved to live separately from me in far away villages and towns. There were but my father and me left. When my father passed away, I moved away from my father's house and lived in *Kandaal Stung*. My brothers and I lived very far away from one another. We always miss one another very much, but we lived very far away from one another. When we missed one another, we would visit one another once in awhile, and would be together; I would go and visit my stepmother. I dreamed about my mother quite often. When I fell asleep I would dream about her. I just dreamed about her and the dream stopped. It was as if she was walking toward me and it seemed like she was still alive. She didn't even talk to me, and she just left.
- Q. What does it mean when we dream about someone who does not talk to us?
- A. I always notice that when I dream about someone who died, this person would not talk to me. He/she would not talk to me and he/she went back. The person died, and so I don't really know what happened next; I don't know about this.
- Q. Do you have anything more to add to your childhood life?
- A. Where I was living with my mother, I didn't think about anything. Only my mother would think about our life. I was happy with my father and mother, and I had no problems, no difficulty.
- Q. What made you happy?
- A. When I saw my mother coming from somewhere, such as from the market, and

she brought me some sweets to eat, I was happy that was all; when I had sweets to eat I was happy. When she bought clothes for me, I was happy to wear the pants she bought me. When I was young, I was happy to receive some clothes from her. I was happy about these events, that was all.

Q. When you were young, what chores did you do?

A. I was young, so I never did anything. What could I do if I always stayed at home and guarded it? The only thing I did was guard the house when I stayed home. I tidied up the house, swept outside it, and the inside. We had a pair of cows which were tied near the house and I gave them hay to eat; I gave them grass to eat near our house. When they were not around, this was all that I did; a child could only do that much chore. When I was older, then I would help my father tend the cows, cook for him and took care of the house. These were my chores. At the time, I didn't weave yet, not yet; when I was older, I wove; at the time, I was about 17 years old when I wove. That was when my stepmother taught me how to weave. When I was young, this was all that I did; feeding the cows, sweeping the house and guarding it. There were not too many children around playing. The village was in the countryside and was very far from other places. I played by myself and I rode on the swings. I was happy riding on the swing; I swung back and forth all day long.

Q. Did your older brothers play with you?

A. No they did not. I saw that they were always being ordained. When I was grown, my brothers were ordained. When I was 17 or 18 years old, I saw that my brothers were ordained from that time on. Ever since I was young, I saw them being ordained to be the monks.

Q. When you were about 4 to 10 years old, did your brothers ever play with you?

A. How could they come and play with me when they were monks? When I was 14 years old, my mother passed away. Before she passed away, I saw my brothers being ordained to be the monks. They were novice monks, and adult monks. They lived in the pagoda ever since they were young men. They studied Cambodian while being monks. In the old days, the boys lived in the pagodas, you know. My parents had their sons live in the pagoda and study Cambodian. They had them live at the pagoda even before they were ordained. When I was young, my brothers never came to play with me, well, I kind of forget about it now. They never played with me; they always stayed at the pagodas. They left for the pagodas, ever since I still had the "*chuk, kampaoy*" shoving the head and leave around bunch of hair either at the top, the two sides, or behind the head, either here, or there, on top of my head, and I would run and trot behind my mother. I always saw my brothers living at the pagoda and never saw them live at

- home.
- Q. When you were young, have you ever thought that you were all alone?
- A. I have never thought that way at all. I had no older sibling to play with me. There were some other children who happened to come by and visit me. Once in awhile, the children would come and play with me. I went to visit them once in a while; our houses were far from one another. Our villages were far from one another. We lived in the countryside. When I was 16 years old, I had some friends to play with me; they were young girls, about my own age. They came by to visit me.
- Q. How old were you when your father married his second wife?
- A. When my mother passed away, I was 14 years old. Four years later, my father married his second wife.
- Q. After your mother's death, how was your sorrowful life?
- A. The responsibility fell on my father's shoulders to raise me up. At that time, I didn't think about anything. All I knew was that my father came back from farming and he would bring some food for me. I didn't think about anything at all. If he told me to do some chores, like he would say: "Child, stay home and take care of the house," or "Now, child, tend the cows." I would do it, and then he left. I then played with other teenage girls about my age.
- Q. Did you miss your mother when she passed away, or didn't you remember it?
- A. Yes I missed my mother. She passed away; I missed her. I was always crying; yes, I missed her.
- Q. Your mother passed away. What did you think you would do?
- A. What did I think about? Well, I thought, I don't have a mother any more; she used to be with me, now she is gone. When she was gone, I just lived with my father, I depended on him. I missed her; all I could do was to miss her, but I could not bring her back. Therefore, I just concentrated on my father. Of course I missed my mother. It was terrible that she passed away. When she was alive, she raised me up. When she was gone, I concentrated my thoughts on my father.
- Q. Did you have an uncle, an aunt, or other members of your family who helped care for you?
- A. Yes, there was someone, but he lived very far away from us. He lived in another province. My parents' hometown was far away from his; where was it now? My

father lived in *Prey Traach* village, he lived very far way; my mother lived in *Phneal Kuk* village, *Baty* town, all the way over there. But then, he moved to *Takeo* town where I was born; I was the only one who was born there. When we went to live there, they took along my mother's younger brother, and he passed away. He only had a child, I only had this cousin who would come and visit us and who lived close enough. The other relatives never came to visit us at all. The other villagers who lived in the same village were our friends. We considered them as our relatives; the villagers were just like our relatives.

- Q. Did you ever dream about your brothers, relatives and parents?
- A. What memories would I have about my relatives when they lived so far away?
- Q. Have you ever thought about your parents at the time when you were living with them when you were just a young girl?
- A. Of course I did. In the old days, when I lived there, it was . . . I know that my brothers and I are all separated from one another now. They were all dead. When I came here, I thought about my brothers and relatives who are separated from me now; I always think about them, of course, but I don't know what I can do about it; they were all dead, and gone; my parents are all gone too; I don't know what to do; what can I do when they are all gone?
- Q. Did you ever dream of them?
- A. Yes I do. I dreamed about my mother and my father in the old days. I saw them coming. They were walking inside the house. My mother would come in the house from one side, and my father from another side; they were walking straight to me. As soon as they got into the house, they vanished. Nothing else happened. They did not talk to me.
- Q. Did you see them very often?
- A. No I didn't. I only dreamed about them once since I came to the United States.
- Q. When you dreamed about your parents and they did not talk to you, what did this mean?
- A. I presumed that they already passed away.
- Q. In your dream, did you believe that your parents have a happy or sad life?
- A. I didn't know where they had gone to. If they had left this life, maybe they were reincarnated into a new person who might even be quite grown by now. They

might have gone to paradise. I can't say anything about it. Sometimes I thought that my mother might have gone to paradise because she was a devout woman.

Q. Who was the person who arranged for your marriage? Did you know your

Q. Do you still remember any more memories about your childhood?

A. When my mother and father were together, I was very happy. When they slept, when they ate, we did that together, and I was happy, that was all. At meal time, we were all together, my parents and I; sometimes, my brothers the monks would come, and we would be together; we were together with the monks; my brothers came and ate with us. Sometimes, my brothers, the monks, came from *Ang Rokar*, and *Chrum* pagodas. Three of them would come, and four of them would leave.

Q. When the groom's family went and asked your hand in marriage, did your father

Q. What do you think of this interview?

A. I don't really know. Whether he did ask for my opinion, I said it was up to my father. I

Q. Can this interview give you any problem in the future? I didn't really know what to say, because I didn't know. At that time, I had no idea

Q. I was naive. I am telling you the truth, you know. I did not know about

A. I would say no. I know about it yet, and I did not know him either. He came to ask

Q. Didn't you teach us about Buddhism in your interview? No, but I did not know him.

A. Yes, I understand. I am very glad that it gave me peace.

A. You know, he lived in Kamnal Stung town, near Phnom Penh city. As for me, I lived in Takeo province. We lived quite far away from each other. It was a while, the whole rainy season, that is three months before I got married. When the cool season arrived, we got married.

Q. Was your husband's parents still living when he went to ask you hand in marriage?

A. His sister came to ask my hand in marriage for him. His parents were deceased. His sister did it for him.

Q. In your generation, before the bride's parents gave her away in marriage, did they like to go to a fortune teller?

A. At that time, of course people did it. My father did not go to a fortune teller. He knew how to tell a fortune somewhat. He said the horoscope was good. He did not seek help from a fortune teller. I did not know whether or not the groom's side went to see a fortune teller. My father did not go around and look for a fortune teller. He said that it was all right for him to marry me off to the groom. That was all that he said. I don't really know. My father did not go to any fortune teller. I did not see him go to see one. He already knew how to tell fortune

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 2

Q. Who was the person who arranged for your marriage? Did you know your husband before your marriage?

A. First of all, his sister got married and came to live in my hometown. His sister was married and came to my hometown to make a living. She saw me and inquired my father about me, and my father agreed to her proposition. Not too long after he agreed to his proposition, he married me off. I had not met him before. At the time, I had a stepmother. When I got married, my mother was passed away for quite some time.

Q. When the groom's family went and asked your hand in marriage, did your father and stepmother ask for your opinion?

A. My father and stepmother did ask for my opinion. I said it was up to my father. I didn't really know what to say, because I didn't know. At that time, I had no idea what a husband was. I didn't know; I was already 19 years old and I didn't know about it. I was naive. I am telling you the truth, you know. I did not know about it at all; I didn't know about it yet, and I did not know him either. He came to ask my hand in marriage, and he was in the village for awhile, but I did not know him.

Q. How long after the proposition did you get married?

A. You know, he lived in *Kandaal* Stung town, near Phnom Penh city. As for me, I lived in *Takeo* province. We lived quite far away from each other. It was a while, the whole rainy season, that is three months before I got married. When the cool season arrived, we got married.

Q. Were your husband's parents still living when he went to ask you hand in marriage?

A. His sister came to ask my hand in marriage for him. His parents were deceased. His sister did it for him.

Q. In your generation, before the bride's parents gave her away in marriage, did they like to go to a fortune teller?

A. At that time, of course people did it. My father did not go to a fortune teller. He knew how to tell a fortune somewhat. He said the horoscope was good. He did not solicit help from a fortune teller. I did not know whether or not the groom's side went to see a fortune teller. My father did not go around and look for a fortune teller. He said that it was all right for him to marry me off to the groom. That was all that he said. I don't really know. My father did not go to any fortune teller. I did not see him go to see one. He already knew how to tell fortune

himself.

Q. Did he tell fortune for his relatives or neighbors?

A. No, he did not. He did not tell fortune for them. He only knew how to tell fortune for his children, that was all. He never would tell fortune for other people.

Q. When your husband married you, how old was he?

A. At that time, he was 47 years old. He was quite old; as for me, I was 19 years old. He was 47 years old. He was old, you know. He was ordained a monk for a long time (laugh).

Q. Did you get married?

A. Yes, of course I got married.

Q. When he passed away, how old was he?

A. When he passed away, he was 79 years old. He was born in the year of the pig; was he over 70 years old? He was quite old. He was sick due to his old age.

Q. Had you seen him before you got married?

A. I saw him when he first came to ask for my hand, sure I did.

Q. Did you have a chance to talk to him?

A. Being a young girl in that generation, I did not talk to him. I tried to avoid him. When he came inside the house, I ran off; I was scared.

Q. Why were you scared?

A. I was scared of that old man. I saw that he was old, so I was scared of him. (laughs)

Q. Why did you get married with a man who was old and whom you were scared of?

A. My brothers did not agree to the marriage at all, but my father wanted to marry me off, saying that I was born and brought sickness with me, and got sick too often. I was sick so many times. I was skinny and the smallest. So then, my father said that he wanted me to marry an old man. In Cambodia, in the old days, old husbands took care of their wives, and cared for them when they were sick. If he married me off to a younger man, he would not take care of me. I was always sick, you see, what could I do?

- Q. Did you agree with your father's idea?
- A. Well, I just took a chance like he did. It was true that I was always sick; I could not do any work at all.
- Q. Before he married you, what kind of a man was he? What kind of work did he have? How many years was he in the monkhood?
- A. He lived in his hometown; I didn't know for how long he was a monk; I did not really question him about this. I only knew that he was a monk for quite a while until he was old. He was a *Kruu Sout* (assistant chief of a Buddhist monastery).
- Q. Did he marry you right after he left the monkhood?
- A. It could be that he has left the monkhood for quite some time, I guess before he married me; he did not leave it and married me right away. I guess he left it for two or three years before he married me.
- Q. Before the marriage, what kind of work did he do?
- A. He climbed palm trees to pick the palm fruits and collect palm juice. Yes, he was a farmer, and climbed palm trees; he farmed. In my hometown, all we could do was farm, and grow fruits and vegetables, watermelons, and pumpkins, etc. He made palm sugar.
- Q. So then, you did not know him at all, right?
- A. I did not know him at all. I had not spoken to him. When he came over to my house I did not talk to him at all. If he came over and fixed our ox cart, for example, right next to me, and I was weaving, I never spoke to him. All I did was to go on weaving.
- Q. After your marriage, did you continue to weave?
- A. I kept on weaving; for example, I wove some *kramars* to sell. I wove cotton *kramars*, made from the cotton which people made into threads by using local gadget with a crank. I dyed the materials which I wove and used them as traditional skirts.
- Q. After the proposition, how long afterwards did you get married?
- A. His sister asked my father for my hand for her brother in the rainy season, and I got married in the cool season. Therefore, it was about three months. Right after the proposition, people married off their daughters right away, without delay.

- Q. How was your marriage ceremony conducted?
- A. First of all, for the marriage ceremony, a hall was built. The groom's hall was built according to the month. For a certain month, the hall was built in front of the bride's house, to the south of it for another month, and behind it for another month. It was built according to the month.
- Q. Why did the people build the groom's halls, and changed their directions according to the month like this?
- A. Concerning this question, I don't really know the reason behind it either. I can't answer your question about the month because I forget what month it was. This is because they changed the direction according to the month, such as the *piisaag* or the *ch eh* month (lunar system). Whatever the name of the months; I don't really know much about this, but I did see that people change the direction like this. I saw that the people changed the "areca flower hall" this way; the groom's side changed the direction. When I got married, the hall was built on my house's side. After this hall was built, they walked or brought the groom in a car, in a procession and he would go inside the hall the day the marriage ceremony was held. As for the hall, it was built depending on the number of people. When they had a lot of people to help, it was finished in one to two days. If they did not have too many people to help, it took them three days to finish it. They built it beforehand. If they had a lot of people, they would build it in the morning and in the afternoon, the guests would come in a procession with the groom and go to stay in the hall. If they did not have many people to help, then the hall would be small; if they had many guests, the hall would take longer to build since it would be bigger. When they had fewer help, they would build it in the morning, and in the afternoon, the group would go to the bride's house in a procession and stayed in that hall. Before he went inside the hall, there was a person acting as a guide, "leading the way," and he or she would ask the bride's parents' permission for the "way" to go into the hall. He or she asked their permission to build the hall; after it was built, the groom's friends and relatives walked him in a procession to the hall and he would stay there. The guide to lead the way would go up the bride's house and asked the bride's parents' permission to put the groom's wedding provisions, which he brought, to put other things, the wedding's provisions and things, to go up inside the house. The bride's parents then granted the permission for him or her and the rest of the groom's entourage to go inside.
- Q. What are the provisions and necessary things for the wedding ceremony?
- A. The day the groom went to stay in the groom's hall, we did not take the provisions in yet. The guests would go to have meals in the hall. Our guests are in a section. At night, a traditional wedding ensemble played wedding music to entertain us in the hall. If the people wanted to, they would . . . the first night, the groom would

just go stay inside the hall, and not much happened yet. The music would just keep the hall lively. The wedding ceremony would last two nights. Another night and the next morning we would receive the guests. We received the guests, and there would be a ceremony of provisions presentations. This, of course, means that the ceremony lasted for two nights. If it lasted only one night, the same night, they would have the ceremony of tying raw threads around the couple's wrists.

Q. How many nights did your wedding ceremony last?

A. Mine only lasted for one night, you see; other people's lasted for two nights, mine only lasted for one night, just one night. When the groom's party got to my place, people tied the raw threads around his wrists for good luck and prosperity wishes in the groom's hall. They did the same thing for the bride in her house. In the evening, they invited the monks to the bride's house for the recitation of Buddha's scriptures; after the recitation of Buddha's scriptures Before the scriptures recitations, there was something which was like the invocation of the *Neak Ta*, you know, the spirit of the region, county, forest, etc. It was a procession to the *areca* nut tree to cut its flowers for the scriptures recitation. They play wedding music in the procession.

Q. What did they do in this ceremony of cutting the *areca* flowers?

A. In order to cut the *areca* flowers, the musicians, the groom, the *Acha* who acted as a guide to lead the groom, and another man who walked at the end of the line and who served as the person to cut the *areca* flowers, all went to the tree. The groom held a tray on a stand this way to hold the *areca* flowers base. After the man cut the flowers, he put them on the tray on a stand and they brought the flowers in a procession toward the bride's house and put them in the hall. Afterwards, they took it in a procession and put in the bride's house. After the scripture's recitation, the people went down to the hall from the bride's house (high on stilts) and the monks returned to the pagoda. The monks returned to the pagoda and at my wedding ceremony, there were many monks, about five or six monks, you know, because all my brothers were monks. My wedding ceremony was quite different from normal ceremonies. At my wedding ceremony, the monks recited the scriptures at night, and the next morning we offered foods to the monks. My wedding ceremony was not like other wedding ceremonies; it was a ceremony with the *Trai*y (the three pieces of the Buddhist monk's robe).

Q. What is a ceremony of the *Trai*y?

A. I don't really know much about it. My father offered the *Trai*ys to the monks. Well, it was like he prepared them and offered them to the monks who then threw the *areca* flowers on the groom and me.

Q. What does each one of them contain?

A. It is up to each individual to prepare it. We put whatever we want to in it. For example, we might want to put provisions such as the monk's robe, their under garments, teas, sugar, soaps, and colognes. In the old days, these were the provisions, you know, things like toothbrushes for the monks; there were quite many provisions, such as fruits and sweets, and the people would put them in deep round baskets in the old days, there were many monks. After the ceremony in which we offered these provisions to the monks, they would eat and after the meals, the monks took the "*Traiy*" to the pagoda. We then would hold a ceremony of tying raw threads around the couple's wrists.

Q. Who were the people who tied the raw threads around the couple's wrists?

A. The older folks, such as our aunts, our parents' older brothers and sisters, our older brothers and sisters, you know; if we don't have any close relatives, then we have the neighbors, other older folks, and other relatives who would tie the threads around our wrists. If we have relatives, then they are the ones who would do it. First, our parents would do it, then our older siblings, and so on so forth, down the line, the first cousins, then the second cousins, then our acquaintances, and our friends, who would tie the threads around our wrists down the line.

Q. What does this ceremony of tying the raw threads around the couple's wrists mean?

A. This raw threads tying ceremony means that the people bless the couple's souls so that the newlyweds would be prosperous, according to our ancestors, you know. I don't really know much about it; it helps us to have a good health. After the ceremony, we had the responsibility to receive our guests. We would receive our guests. In my generation, in the evening, there were only our relatives, our aunts and uncles and nobody else beside them; there were only my aunts and uncles who were close to us and were nearby and four or five older people who would come and eat at our house. They would conduct the ceremony of informing our deceased ancestors of our marriage again, you see, and the wedding ceremony was concluded. When the three days were up, we would take the *areca* flowers and offer them to the monks.

Q. Didn't the people throw the *areca* flowers on the newlyweds?

A. Yes, they already did. But, there were three bundles of *areca* flowers; the people would open up the two bundles and the one that was left and given to us, was reserved for us so we could take it to the pagoda and offer it to the monks, in order to receive the best wishes from them. Three days later, after the ceremony, we went to the monks for the wishes. After we went to receive the best wishes from the monks, we came home and we tried hard to make a living.

- Q. After your marriage, did you still live with your parents?
- A. Yes. I lived with my father. After living with him for about a month, my husband took me to live in his home town in *Kandaal* Stung, way over there, near Phnom Penh city, in *Roka, Tram Khmar*.
- Q. How many children do you have?
- A. I have quite a few children. But, they died after they were born. Some of them were born and died afterwards. Some of them were born, lived for a year and died, and the others were born and died. Some of them were born for two or three months and died. It was as if my children didn't stay with me. My one child was separated from me and I am looking for him at the present time. I had seven children altogether; only one survived. The other six children died while in infancy; I cannot even remember the months they were born; I cannot count the months. I am always forgetful, because I am always sick, you see. My children were born, lived for one or two months and died. I didn't think about the birth months or anything like that. I forget about them. I only remember about the one who survive.
- Q. How many of your children lived to be old enough?
- A. Two of my children lived to be big enough. One of them was older than the one who is separated from me and she died in our village. She died the same time her father did. She either died during the Vietnamese invasion or before that, I don't really know for sure. I am kind of demented. Our child died first, then her father died later. The father died because he was ill. The child also died around the same time. I had seven children, but all of them died in infancy, except for two of them. One of them died, and the other one was separated from me when he was 13 years old when this happened; he was going to be 14 years old. He was born in the year of the snake, you know. He was separated from me in 1979. He was separated from me in *Battambang* city, you know, in *Samlout* while we were in *Samlout*.
- Q. How old were your children who died in infancy?
- A. The oldest one was born and was two months old; he vomited all the time; he was then sick and had a fever and died. Next, I had a set of twins, two of them were born; they were premature, and died six months later. The next one was born and was how old now? He had a stomach ache and dysentery, and we tried to treat him for one month, but he/she died, that was all. I have forgotten all about the dates; I cannot tell you the dates they died or were born. Another baby was still a fetus inside my womb, and I had a miscarriage after a couple of months. After the miscarriage, I carried my older daughter. A daughter has survived; she was older than the rest. She was about ten years old, I believe; she had a fever and she died,

A. about 1973. After this daughter, I had a son who is separated from me now. I am looking for him, but have not found him yet. I am asking some people to look for him. It was this daughter who died just before her father died.

Q. What kind of sickness did this daughter die of?

A. She had a fever.

Q. How did you and your husband feel about your children who died in infancy?

A. I was always sick at the time. At the time, I always had a stomach ache that lasted just one day and I was well. Afterwards, I was dizzy. Normal sicknesses always found their way to me. When I was 30 years old, I fell from the pagoda's dining hall. As a result, this arm was sprained and this other one was lacerated, and both were painful; the accident really crippled me up to now. I am still kind of crippled, but I can still walk. Every time I had diarrhea, oh please forgive me Buddha, I had such a bad diarrhea that I would tell someone about my last wish, that I held someone's hand and told her my last wish; I had such serious diarrhea, and in Cambodia the doctors were so far away. I have never gone to a doctor to treat me because the doctors were in *Takeo* city, and I lived in the countryside, in the farm. I only used folk medicines, such as tree roots or other wild roots, until I had a chance to go to the market place; there were some physicians in the countryside who would treat me until I got better; I would then buy Western medicine; I was taken to a doctor who would treat me and I would then get well; that was the way it was. The main hospital was quite far away in *Takeo* city. There were some in *Ang Rokar*.

Q. Why did a lot of your children die? How did you feel when you were pregnant?

A. Every time I was pregnant, I was always sick. In Cambodia, the only profession I knew was transplanting rice seedlings, and I always pull the rice seedlings. After the child was born, he/she was sick and would vomit and would have a fever, that seemed to be the pattern. As for me, I worked; I didn't do anything else. When the baby was born, I stayed home and took care of him/her.

Q. Why did those children die in childhood?

A. I don't really know why, I don't understand it. I looked for some one to help me care for the baby, yes I did; as for me, I took care of the baby. I didn't do anything else. I always took care of the baby. I was afraid that he/she would die. It was such a waste for me, but they always left me. It was such a waste for me. I was a good mother to them and pampered them. I didn't even let them utter a cry, but they all died, and I don't understand it.

Q. What are your beliefs concerning the deaths of your children?

A. I don't really understand it. Other people's children would remain, as for my children, they always left me. So then, I was wondering how could it be that other people beat and cursed their children and they would still be alive, as for my children, I pampered them, but they didn't live. I was always wondering.

Q. How do you and your husband feel about their deaths?

A. I felt very bad about my children. I couldn't eat, and I couldn't do any work. When my child died, I could not eat anything, because I would miss the child. I couldn't eat any food which my child used to eat. I could not swallow it because I grieved his/her death, his/her value. I had no one to depend on; my children were my only hopes. Now that they are gone, I am demented, I say the wrong things, and kind of forgetful. As for my husband, he was forgetful too. He also grieved for his children.

Q. When your daughter died in 1973, how did you feel at that time?

A. I cried, but tears could not come. When this daughter died, I grieved her death so much that I cried without any tears. She died, and I cried out, without any tears; I could not cry out; it was as though my whole body was dried up. I don't know how my eyes were kind of locked up and were unable to shed tears. There were no tears. I cried but there were no tears; all of a sudden, I cried without tears. At that time, I would say the wrong things. I grieved my daughter's deaths. When I thought about this, my hands and legs would go limp. I grieved very much about my daughter's death.

Q. What kind of illness did your daughters die of?

A. It is difficult to say what kind of sickness she had. We were unable to treat her. I really don't know why. She had a fever, and she always vomited. It was very baffling. After a while, we were looking for a doctor to treat her. We had some medicines for her to take, but the medicines . . . she took the medicines, but they didn't cure her. I bought some Western medicines; I also took her to a doctor, you know. She was better; when we took her home. It seemed like she had a relapse because of the water, I guess. It happened so fast. She went out to play; when she came back she had a fever again. Spirits took her . . . In Cambodia it was very hard in the countryside.

Q. At that time, you and your husband were suffering very much because you were unable to keep your children alive, right?

A. Yes. When we thought about it, we grieved our other children's deaths very much. Our children were gone.

- Q. Why was the other child separated from you?
- A. Before this happened, he always stayed with me. He was in school. Both my children were in school. The older daughter who died was also in school. She went to a school by our house. Our son was also in school, but he did not stay in school too long, because he was still quite young. If my daughter were alive today, she would have been 22 years old. I guess, because she was born in the year of the snake.
- Q. When was your son missing?
- A. I missed this one when the Vietnamese invaded our country, you see; it was in 1979. I don't remember what month it was, I forget about everything. Ever since that time, I have never heard from him. He was 14 years old when he was separated from me. He was sent to clear up a place for gardening. He was clearing up a garden in *Samlout*.
- Q. Did it happen during the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia?
- A. Yes, it happened when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, but it was the Cambodians who sent him there. They sent him to clear a forest for gardening. They sent small children to clear the forest for gardening; those in the children's units. At the time, he was only 13 or 14 years old, that is all.
- Q. What did you do, grandma, in order to bear the ordeal and live in such suffering?
- A. I am thinking about soliciting help from the workers at the humanitarian organizations to look for my son who was separated from me. I am always thinking about my child. Whenever I missed him, I just missed him. When I thought of him, I always reflected this way. My son is so far away from me, furthermore, my husband has fled and left us, and I have no relatives. I am relying on the humanitarian organizations that take care of all the Cambodians, and myself. I am taking refuge here. This is all I can think about; so I just met a very distant relative. I just met her very recently. I met a relative; I thought that at that time, I was still all alone. At the present time, I think that I am still alone. That was the reason why I adhere to the five Buddha's principles, and do good deeds. I am eating my relatives' rice. All my clothes were donated to me. I have nothing which I worked for with my own strength. Nowadays, I adhere to the five principles. Only the Buddha's principles are able to make me forget, kind of lessen my plight. My relatives gave me the clothes. They were my benefactors, and they gave me things. The way I live nowadays, even the house and all the foods were donated to me; so that is why I say that I try to do good deeds, and convey the merits to my relatives, my benefactors and that is all.
- Q. Do your relatives who are staying in Revere have any children?

- A. She is a widow with four children. My sons and daughters went to school for three or four years too, you know. They didn't flunk the courses. This is the reason why I really miss my children very much.
- Q. In your conjugal life, were there any moments when you were happy? When were your happiest moments?
- A. There were some. I was happy when there were religious ceremonies, Cambodian New Years, the *Phcum Bens*, and the breezy season.
- Q. What did you do during these occasions?
- A. During the *Phcum Ben* holidays, we would go to the pagoda and we would be happy. I usually didn't go out and have fun, ever since I was young. I was happy when I went to the religious ceremonies, to the *Kathim* (a fund raising for the pagodas), to *Bom Phka* (another kind of fund raiser), with my husband and my brothers and relatives. Sometimes, when there was no ceremony, I went to visit my relatives at their houses.
- Q. When you were 19 years old, you married the old man who was then 47 years old. How did you feel when you married a husband who was old like this?
- A. First, I was thinking about running away and leaving him. First, I thought about leaving him. I said to myself that he was too old and I was thinking about going back home. I didn't want to live with him. This was what I said. After living with him for a long time, it was all right. I felt sorry for him. I always felt sorry for him. I was not feeling too well very often. I was sick then not too long afterwards, I was sick again. He always took care of me, giving me cold or hot water as needed. I took care of him and he took care of me. I felt sorry for him, so I loved him.
- Q. Initially, how many years have lapsed when you wanted to leave him?
- A. The first year I wanted to leave him. I went to stay at his house for a year, and I wanted to leave him. At the time, I was afraid of him too. I also missed my home and my father, and I was thinking of returning to my village too.
- Q. You said that your father made you marry an old husband, because an old husband knows best how to pamper and take care of his wife. Is his opinion right?
- A. His opinion is right. It is okay, my husband never mistreated me at all. But I said that my father married me off to an old husband, too old. I didn't want him. This was what I thought. In my mind, I thought that, well, I don't really care; he is too old. My relatives did not want me to marry him either, but my father just agreed to give me away. It worked out very well, you see; my husband did not mistreat me. I didn't have such a hard life.

- Q. Then, your husband did most of the chores, right?
- A. He worked much more than I did. I stayed home most of the time, and took care of myself and the children.
- Q. So then, your husband is a good man. He knew how to pamper you, right?
- A. Yes, it was OK.
- Q. Did you have happy memories with your husband which were unforgettable?
- A. Well, of course we had happy memories, but they were not so happy. The happy moments were in the breezy season, such as when we went places. The pagodas were the only places where we went to visit. The pagodas were the only place which made me happy. When I went to the *Phkaa* ceremony, I was very thrilled. I was happy that whole day. Sometimes, I had a good time, not with the *Phkaa* ceremony, but when I was visiting my relatives houses. It was kind of fun. When it was quiet, we went to the watermelon and pumpkin gardens, and this made me happy for the time being. Sometimes, we would go to the farms and look at the palm fruits and the rice. When the rice came out, I was happy. I never had a chance to go out and have fun. I never went out to the market place and looked around, or to go to a noodle shop, I never went to one. The market was far away, and I never went to a noodle shop at all. If I went to the market, I might need to buy some materials, which was normal or some few things. In Cambodia, fruits were plentiful which made me happy, such as palm fruits and mangos. During the mango season, we would go and pick them.
- Q. Why didn't you ever go to have some meals at the shops?
- A. Because, at the farms, it was not If I went to the market, he stayed home, but if I stayed home, he went to the market. The market was far away from home, so we seldom went there together. Every time we went there together, we did not eat at the shops. If we went to *Ang Ta Saom* town, which was far away, we would eat noodles at the shop that one time.
- Q. How far was it from your house to the market? How did you go there?
- A. It was about nine kilometers from my home to *Ang Ta Saom* town. It is also nine kilometers to *Ang Rooka* town. I went there by walking, you see; I walked there to buy some provisions to eat. Sometimes, there was no public buses along the road. The only way I could travel was by foot or by ox cart.
- Q. Have you ever gone to see a movie or a play?

A. I have never gone to see a movie or a play, unless some people rented a movie or paid for a play to be played at the pagoda. I have never gone to see a movie at the movie house.

Q. Why didn't you ever go to see a movie at the movie house?

A. The movies were not too great. I could see them with other people but when I saw them, I got dizzy. When I saw the movies, it was as if the characters and the scenes were running and they seemed to collide with my face. I didn't dare watch them because I got dizzy. I was afraid to see the movies in my times. So now, I get used to them, and they are OK. I have some money, and I can go to see a movie, but I don't want to do it. If I wanted to watch something, it would be a play and the *Ayay*, when a man and a woman sing rhyme words and riddles accompanied by string instruments. When I was young. When my husband asked me to go with him, I would go then. I went to see it with him; for example, the *Bassac* play, legend themes, played by lower land Cambodians. I was mostly happy with the farms. During the farming season, I would farm. After the farming, when the harvest season arrived, I was happy to harvest the rice. I always stayed at the farms. I would not go home until the chores were done. I was in and out of the house. Sometimes, I would stay at the farms for one whole day; sometimes I would rest at the farms by spending one night there. Sometimes, I would go home.

Q. Did you go to the market quite often?

A. In Cambodia, this depends. Sometimes, I would go to the market often, sometimes, I would go there once in awhile. Sometimes, I went there every two or three days. In general, I went to the market every two weeks. Sometimes, I went there once a month. I didn't go to the market too often, because in the countryside, we were able to buy a few things and kept them; we didn't buy foods very often.

Q. Every time you went to the pagodas, what did you do? What did you take to the pagodas?

A. During the *Phcum Ben* ceremony on the first day of the waning moon, I took some foods, such as some soups, some sweets, joss sticks, and candles to hold the *bangsakool* (offering foods to the monks, who then recited Buddha's scriptures to bless the foods and convey the merits to the people's dead ancestors). I would think about my grandmothers and grandfathers who passed away, my children, my aunts, and uncles and I would convey to merits in my mind to them. I don't really know much about the merits. I heard about the merits, so I just went to the pagodas and held religious ceremonies. On the first day of the waning moon, which is called *Ben* one, we would take turns taking the Ben. People went to the pagodas so did we. It all depended on the turns that we took. We might be

responsible to take the Ben for three or four days. When it was someone's turn to stay at the pagodas, the person would stay there and cook the foods for the Ben, and the monks would recite the Buddhist scriptures to receive the foods. The monks got up early in the morning and recited the scriptures to receive the foods.

Q. Why did they prepare the foods for the Ben ceremony? What was the purpose of this ritual?

A. They prepared the foods for the Ben to convey the merits to the roaming spirits on earth, who were being punished because of their sins, and they had nothing to eat, so, during the *Phcum Ben* ceremony, they would come to the pagodas and look for their children to see if they came to the pagodas and offered foods to the monks to convey the merits to them or to give foods to them there. When there spirits came up from hell, we would throw the foods to them. I don't know what the monks say in the scriptures. This was what I was told, so I don't really know. They said, we throw the Ben foods to the spirits and they come to eat them.

Q. Which were the circumstances that made you the most unhappy when you lived with your husband?

A. The only time I had a hard time was when I was sick. When I was not sick, I didn't have a hard time. Every time I was sick, I would say that I was quite ill. I didn't know whether or not I would get well. I didn't want to leave my husband and children. At that time, this was what I dreaded the most; I was afraid of this the most. I was not afraid of being poor. We were making money fast to have enough. We were neither too rich nor too poor. It was just enough for us to live on like everybody else. When I was in Cambodia, I didn't have pork and beef everyday. I would have to go to the market to buy them. When I lived at the farms, I didn't go to the markets too often. When I went to live in a town, I had a business there. At the beginning I lived in the farms with my father. When I went to live with my husband, I lived close to the market. My child and my husband went to the market often. I didn't go there too often; it was my child and husband who always went to the market.

Q. Your father worried about your illness. Was this illness fatal to you or dangerous to your health? Were you ill very often? What were the symptoms?

A. Once a year I would get very ill. It all depends. My illness came and went erratically. Because I was born and was sickly. My father said that I was sickly and was in poor health. Look at my head. My head was shaved because it had some kind of disease, skin, you see. And just because I had my ears pierced, just look at the scars here; my ears were pierced. Well, it is just like I had a difficult time, you see. I was sick all the time. I was not well. I was ill when I was young. One time I was sick with this, another time I was sick with that. For example, I had a disease that was painful swelling of finger tips. This hand can't be used to

hold anything well. Some kind of a rash always appeared, and it took the whole year for it to disappear. Here, look at the scars. This hand got hit with the foot mortar and pestle. Now, I cannot spread my hand. When I spread it, it is sore and it hurts. I feel like my veins are hurting. My veins are not good. This hand was hit with the foot mortar and pestle and it was injured for the whole year.

Q. Have you been sick often ever since childhood?

A. Yes. When I was old enough, I was sick, and I was always afraid; I was afraid it was disease, such as being afraid of ghosts. My mother always went to fortune tellers to try to cure me.

Q. What did the Cambodian folk healer say you had?

A. They didn't say anything. They gave me some herbal medicines to take. They would spit chewed betel chews and limes, and I was cured. My fever was gone. I was always tired, I had no energy. It is hard for me to say how I felt. I had a fever quite often. I had a cold and a cough that lasted two or three days and I felt better. I had the flu for two or three days. I was sick so often, therefore, my mother . . . when I was old enough, I was able to work like everyone else, and then I was not sick so often any more. When I got married, I started to get sick again; my hand started to hurt.

Q. Are you still as sick as you were before?

A. Right now, I am not sick any more. The only thing that still hurts me is the internal pain caused by the fall from the pagoda's monk dining hall, the height of an elephant when he is standing up. My knees still hurt. When I walk, they are really sore. When I sit down, they hurt some, but not as bad as when I walk.

Q. What did you do to cure yourself of your illness, so that you are not sick like before?

A. I don't really know. But, I had Cambodian folk healers treat me, then Western doctors in the refugee camps. They gave me some medicines to take permanently.

Q. At the present time, you come and live in the pagoda. What are your beliefs in Buddhism which have helped alleviate your sickness?

A. I am sick, excuse me, I am sick. This is my illness, and the doctors gave me some medicines and my sickness gets better but as for my mental state, I have to adhere to Buddha's principles before I feel better mentally, speaking about mental health.

Q. How do you feel about the customs and Buddhism?

- A. According to the Cambodian custom, we believe in Buddhism. As for me, I am alone. I believe in Buddhism and I believe that when I get old or that I have a business, I don't think very much about the wealth. I think that my life doesn't last very long, therefore, I only depend on Buddha's, Dharma's and the Sangha's grace which is able to, well, provide me with food in the after life, you see, so that I won't be sinful. This is what I mean by having my faith in Buddhism. If we are still living and when we are sick, we depend on the doctors on one hand. On the other hand, we depend on Buddhism. If we are living in this world now, and we feel that we are old now, and all alone, therefore, we have to depend on Buddhism; this is how I feel, I cannot speak for other people. I depend on only two factors: first, the doctors who treat me, and second, I only have faith in Buddha in my life. Wherever I am going to, I depend on these two factors more than anything else. They are of equal importance to me.

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 3

- Q. When did the communists control Cambodia? What did they do to your own family and other people?
- A. I am very sorry, excuse me, I am very forgetful. Besides I am not very eloquent. At that time, I was demented, and I didn't remember very much about anything. The people in the period of time, well, I could not express many ideas like other people could, because it . . . at that time, I was living with them, and I didn't know when they took over Cambodia, and I didn't know when it happened. I only know that, oh now, they started to stop us. It was night time and I was at the Ang Rokaa's market place; in the evening they said that now, we had to be evacuated from the market. I lived in Ang Rokaa, you see. They made us leave our village. Everybody left, but I didn't leave yet. I was the last one to leave. They made us leave and go to live in a village quite far away from the market. I was going to live with other people. They made me farm along with other people. The following year, they evacuated me out of that place to live in another village, still further and further and we built another village. When I was evacuated, first it was all right, the first time I left my village. When I was first evacuated, I still had food to eat. The first year, I didn't eat porridge yet; I still ate rice. I was farming and I ate rice. We ate in the communes. I had never eaten in the commune. I was used to eating individually, each family's members eating together. In the old days, we ate individually. In Cambodia, we had private businesses. At that time, we ate in the communes, we ate altogether. We went to do the labor and there were cooks who would make foods for us. The first few days we had rice to eat, we did not lack rice yet; but they limited our rations. Some days they would give us the vegetables which we grew. We all grew vegetables. Whatever vegetables we had, we would eat them, whether they were the *phtii* (common leafy green vegetables), the *trokuon* (common vegetables), the gourds or the pumpkins, in the cooperatives. When we grew a whole lot of them, we would eat them. The following years, I don't remember what year it was, but it was about two or three years that we lived there, they made me change the village, they moved me to another village. I was also farming like in the other village. I only farmed and worked in the gardens. When we were old, they had us work close to home; they made the young people go to do the labor far away from home.
- Q. At that time, did you live with your husband and children?
- A. At first we did not go too far away from our village yet. The first year we did some farming. The children went to work in the units. Small children stay in the district, in the villages; they did light chores, such as pulling off the grass, just like other children. You know, my little daughter, she went to the children's unit and ate there. The little children ate rice in the children's unit. I was an old woman,

so I went to the old people's units. For example, they made me weave some mats, or babysit; people my age did this. Sometimes, they said that we old people could not do hard labor. So when we were evacuated to a second village, we helped the people transplant the rice seedlings. During the rice transplant season, they made us go transplant the rice seedlings or pull them out. During the dry season, they made us do other chores, such as weaving palm leaf mats. Some old women would cut off the leaves from the trees mid rib while some others would weave the mats. As for the children, they went to join the units. I don't know where they went to. They were gone for a long period of time, and I didn't know where they went to. They did not allow my daughter to stay with me.

Q. How old were the children who were put in the children's units?

A. My daughter went to stay at the children's unit since she was quite small. They took her away and put her in the children's unit. In the evening, they let her come home to sleep with me. When she was older, from 12 years onward, she was gone the whole time; she spent the nights at the children's unit. Sometimes, she was sick at the unit, and I asked them Khmer Rouge for the permission to go and visit her. I traveled a long distance, you see, because it was in the forest. We stayed there to dig a channel. When I always missed her they separated her from me, and my husband was old. I asked them for the permission to go and visit her, since her foot was swollen; when I asked them for the permission to go visit my daughter, they would not allow me to go. At that time, they got stricter and stricter. I always asked them for the permission to go visit my daughter; when I asked them too many times finally they let me go. I asked them for the permission to bring my daughter home. They allowed me to bring her home for two or three days. She got better and they made her go back again. At that time, they gave the orders to have me go dig the channel like everybody. While I was digging the channel, I had a stomach ache and diarrhea. At that time, I was very sick. I was on the brink of fainting. I was about to faint. I only had liquid soup to take. "Oh, Buddha please forgive me, I am speaking the truth," that liquid soup was clear . . . the rice . . . it was actually the porridge was kind of thick, it was not too watery. At that time, I asked them for the permission to go home. I thought to myself, I am not going to live. My children were gone, dead; my old man, my husband, was 73 years old; he was many years my senior. He was born in the year of the pig. When he was 47, I was 19 years old. The age difference was so great. My father gave me to him. My husband winded rope in the village, and I dug the channel. I was not able to dig the ground on account of this sore knee. I have been sick ever since I was young. Since I could not do anything much, I was kind of skinny. When I walked, I always shook like that. When I asked them for the permission to go home, they allowed me to go to my village. When I stayed in the village, they made me weave the mats. I boiled *preah phneu's* barks (herbs) here and there, and my stomach aches got better. They got Western medicines, you know, at the cooperative clinic, they got them. Their medicines were not as good

as our Western medicines in the old time.

Q. What kind of medicines were there in that period of time?

A. Their medicines were kind of . . . they had syringes to give the injections. They gave us the injections if we had malaria. When I had a fever, they gave me some injections, you see. I don't know what kind of medicines they were, but they gave me intravenous injections. I don't know their kind of medicines. They went to give me the injections in the village. I went to their clinic, they had a social clinic, and I got well, then I went back to work. At that time, they stopped forcing me to go with the people in the unit because I couldn't go on any longer. I would only make some mats; after making the mats, I was made to go harvest the rice, grow watermelons and pumpkins with other people. Some people dug up the group and made some holes in it, and all elderly ladies were the ones who grew the vegetables.

Q. What did your husband do?

A. He just wound rope. What could he do? He could only hardly walk. As for me, they had me stay at the village and make some mats. I made some mats, my old man wound the rope.

Q. In your village, did they give you enough food to eat?

A. When it was meal time, they rounded up all of us elderly ladies, and made us eat in the "Kouseen". They called their "dining place" Kouseen, you know, their cooperative? They would sound the bell, and we would go in to eat the foods, and we all would . . . they would put the foods for us, and we would eat it. When I finished eating it, I would bring the food for my old man at home. He was not able to go to the "Kouseen". Our children went away with their unit. In the morning, they would have us go to eat too, and in the evening, they also had foods for us.

Q. What time was it in the morning, grandma?

A. It was about 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning. As for the evening, it was not until 6:00 or 7:00 before we ate; it all depends because they made us do some labors, whether or not we worked slowly or fast. Once a week, they would give us some desserts. Sometimes, they gave us sweet sticky rice soup, other times, it was the *banh cranoeuk* (made from sticky rice flour, with sweet bean filling and watery syrup with coconut milk and ginger for flavoring). Sometimes, there were sweet potatoes, and they boiled them for us to eat.

Q. What time did you leave for work and what time did you stop?

- A. As for me, I had to be at the work site at about 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning. I would start to make the mats at about 7:00 in the morning. At 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning, we would get up. These people who went to the work site which was quite far away have already left. The elderly left their huts at about 6:00 a.m. Sometimes we got to the work site at 6:30 a.m., while some other times we got there about 7:00 a.m. when we were late. And when we were early, we got there at 6:00 a.m. and we were all there. We started the labor quite early, it was not too late; sometimes we started at 7:00 a.m., sometimes at 6:00a.m. I am talking about the people who wove mats.
- Q. Were you allowed to cook your own rice? Did they allow you to have pots, pans, and dishes?
- A. They confiscated all the pots, pans and dishes; they did not even leave us with a single glass. We only had a *tralook* (polished coconut shell). If we had a tralook, they came around and checked on it. Whoever had pots, pans and dishes, would lose them to the Khmer Rouge. My old man had a kettle left. I had a pot reserved for making the porridge for my old man. After the porridge was done, I hid the pot. I hid it inside of this thing, or that thing, so I could cook the porridge in it for him when he was not feeling well, you know. I was able to make some porridge for him when no one was looking, using the rice ration. They gave a rice ration to my old man, a tin can full of rice for the morning and the evening. But, they gave me rice to eat, because I was doing the labor for them. They gave me extra thick porridge, you know, the kind of thick porridge, and I ate it. They gave me two ladles of rice. When I couldn't finish eating it, I took my portion to my old man, and I ate my other portion. I kept the uncooked rice. I hid some rice, no one saw it, and no one knew about it. They thought that I have finished eating all my portion. I got up early in the morning to make porridge, and I would shield the fire so they would not see it, and so that the light from the fire would not cast the shadow outside, and I made the porridge for him to eat. I went to do the labor. When I got a small portion of the ration, I would hide it.
- Q. Did you have meat and fish to eat?
- A. There weren't a lot of fish and meat, because they did not allow us to go around and look for them. We still went around and looked from some foods though. I am telling you the truth, you know, I am not lying to you, I am sincere; everything I told you was true. When they allowed us to have a break, we went away from the work site and we would go to a stream to take a bath and since our homeland Cambodia is so rich in farm and flora it was just a stream, you see, as soon as we went in, we were able to catch fish and put them in our pockets and inside the hem of our skirts, rolled up at our waists. Now we can't do this; we could do this at that time. We couldn't do this before that either. When we went up the banks, we

would eat them of course. If I have ever committed any sins, I would at that time.

At the beginning, I would cry along the way. I was crying, and I would say: "I don't have any Buddha's principles in my mind at all." I cried all the way. I thought to myself, "I sure don't have any merit; when I die and go to hell, they will tie me up and beat me up, they will undoubtedly beat me; I am a sinner." I was frightened; I was afraid that after I die, I would go to hell and they would beat me up. No one ever beat me up. My mother never cursed me. When I die, the *Yoam Pheebaal* (guardian of hell) will beat me up. I was very frightened, and I was very afraid. I asked some people: "If I have accumulated some merits, and adhered to Buddha's principles, would I still have some Buddha's precepts?" They said that I did not have any merits, not even a little bit of merit; this was what they told me. "How could you have any merit if you kill some fish and eat them?" So I said, "Well, I have no choice; what can I do? On the one hand I feel sorry for my old man, he is old, furthermore I am hungry myself; on the other hand, my child, a small child, might not have anything to eat at the unit. My child is kind of sickly and skinny too."

Q. In Pol Pot's regime, was there any pagoda in your village?

A. There were two or three pagodas. But there were only the pagodas and no monks. The monks were all gone. I didn't know where they have gone to; all of a sudden, they disappeared. The Buddha statues disappeared too. They used the pagodas as cooperatives. They put the cooperatives in the pagodas. Whenever they need to hold a meeting, they would do it in the pagodas.

Q. Grandma, where have they taken the Buddha statues to? How about the monks?

A. I don't know. As for the monks, they were all disrobed and disappeared. They were all gone. I don't know where they have gone to. I am not so clever and educated like everyone else. I stayed home and I was not informed. The Buddha statues disappeared. The Buddha statues disappeared and so did all the monks. I asked some people: "Where have all the Buddha statues gone to? I don't see any Buddha statues!" They said, "Grandma, you don't know. They took all the Buddha statues and kept them in Tram Khna town. You don't know about this, grandma." I said, "Is that right? They can transport the Buddha statues...but they are such big statues!" They said, "Yes, they transported all the Buddha statues." I did not talk about the statues anymore.

One day, they held a meeting at the pagoda. They would have bananas and sweets for us to eat as usual. They put them in the trays for us; when I looked around, I didn't see any monk, and I didn't see any Buddha statues, so I cried. The Khmer Rouge asked me, "Grandma, why do you cry?" I said, "I have a stomach cramp; I also have a headache. I think I am not feeling too well." So they rubbed my body with oil and a coin to make some red streaks, believed to alleviate my pains. I lied to them. I missed the Buddha statues so much. I thought of the Buddha statues

and I longed for them. I use to see them and I was used to the idea that my brothers were monks. When I saw the bananas and the sweets, and thought about those provisions which I used to take to the monks first before I ate them myself. I was also used to pray to Buddha first before I ate my meals; for that reason, I cried; when I cried they asked me: "What are you doing, grandma?" So I said that I had stomach cramps and a headache. After they rubbed me with the oil and a coin, I stopped crying. I was very embarrassed. I was spared then. That only happened to me once.

Q. Are your brothers still alive?

A. My father passed away a long time ago. My older brothers died before my father did. One of them died in Mong town, another one died while still a monk. There are two brothers left; one is in Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge had his wife go and get him. They took him away and he disappeared; I have no idea where they were taking him to. I went there and visited him twice. He didn't let me go near him. He said, "Don't come near me; don't come near me." In the old government, he worked as a policeman near the Vietnamese border. My other brother was a monk. When he was separated from me, he was still a monk. I don't know where he has gone to. He was scared. They asked him: "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" He said that he was alone, and that he had no brothers or sisters. As for me, I also told them that I was alone. I didn't tell them about my brothers; I was worried about my brother who was a policeman, and my nephews who were soldiers; for that reason, I didn't dare tell them about these relatives. When the Khmer Rouge knows about them, it is finished, they would have not lived.

Q. If these people found out about them, what will they do?

A. They would take the whole family away and kill them; they would not leave a single member alive. I didn't inform them about my relatives. I told them a lie. Right now I asked Buddha for his forgiveness because I If I didn't find a way out, I will not be spared.

Q. In my opinion, your lies did not make anyone suffer and get in trouble, right? Because you only lied in order to survive and be secure, right? And nobody was in jeopardy because of your lies, right? Is this the way it was, grandma?

A. Yes; then I think that, I guess that, according to Buddha's precepts, I didn't commit any sins. I did lie to them, but nobody was in jeopardy because of my lies.

Q. Do you feel that your brother who was a policeman saved your life?

A. Yes. He wanted to help me, that was why he didn't want me to go near him. I love my brother very much. My brother held me until my feet dropped to the

ground (so big that my feet touched the ground when he held me). He held me until I was a big girl; he pampered me very much because I was the youngest one on the last days before the fall he left; he went to Phnom Penh. He quit his job as a policeman. They still had him work there. He had a rank, and wore the insignia which was big and obvious, and the Khmer Rouge saw that. I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know anything at all; you see, I was ignorant. I was not aware of anything at all. I was ignorant and sincere. I wanted to touch the insignia. I went to visit him once. He stayed quite far away from me; later on, he didn't want me to go and visit him any more. He disappeared since then. He disappeared and I had no idea where he was; his wife was still around then.

Q. Is his wife still alive?

A. When she was still alive, you know, their children, on the way to . . . we were separated in Pol Pot regime. The Vietnamese had not invaded Cambodia yet. The Khmer Rouge always evacuated me here and there all the time; they would ask me if I had any brothers and sisters and I would say no, I didn't have any.

Q. Is she still living right now?

A. I don't really know, I don't know about their children either. Their oldest child named Chan was reported to have died. Chan Than is still alive. They had Chan go and pull the row boats, and he was hemorrhaging. They had him push the row boats; they took him away by force and made him push the row boats. I don't really know what kind of merchandise they were transporting in the boats, and he was hemorrhaging and died. This was Than. Chan Than was also taken away to do a labor, but I don't know what kind of labor. As for Cham Roeun was forced to join the army. They were all separated from me and their children. The daughters were Vanna and Bunna, who had died. Vanna had some children; she came along with me. Her grandmother walked with her all the way. We were separated in the forest. All together I had 12 nephews and nieces, who were my older brother, the policeman, but I forget some of their names.

Q. Please talk in details about your family's life in the Communist Regime.

A. My old man was not doing anything. The only made him wind the rope. They have never forced or cursed him at all. They only had him wind the ropes. He was deaf. They called him, and he went to the "Kouseen" (dining hall); they asked him: "What are you coming here for?" They asked him: "Why are you coming here?" He asked them back: "Do you want tobacco, here, take it." So, they were not able to communicate with him. As for me, the foods which were given to me . . . they gave the foods to the villagers to eat in the units. They would give me some foods to eat, but it depended on each unit. They had us go far away. There was not enough food, you see. People would go around and try

to collect some *chang vas* (vegetables) to make some soups. There was one time when they made a soup with banana trunk and tamarind leaves and gave it to me to eat with the porridge when I dug the channel with my son; when they made soup with this kind of leaves or that kind of leaves for so many months. Oh, yes, once a week they gave us sour soup in that unit. They did not mistreat me but my arm was sore, it was hit by the foot mortar and pestle. They took me to their office one time to interrogate me at six o'clock in the evening. There were two of them, and I was by myself. I went there at six o'clock in the evening. They asked me: "Grandma, you are sick; is it all in your mind, or do you want a husband?" I said: "I am sick. If I am not sick, I would not say that I am. I am sick. My arm is sore. That is why I say that I am sick. My knuckles are swollen." So they said that if I wanted a husband they would find one for me.

Q. At that time, your husband was still alive, right? Why did they ask you this kind of questions?

A. My old man was still alive, you know. They called only me. It was night time at 6:00 p.m. and it was dark. They came and fetched me. I was sitting underneath their house, near the pillars. I was sick. I went there to sit. They also sat there and interrogated; so I said that I was sick. If I were well, I would be able to do the labor. At that time, I thought that I would not be alive. If they took someone to be interrogated at this time of night, most of the time, the person would not live. I thought to myself: "If I were to die, let it be." I told them that I was sick. If I were well I would do the labor; if I was not well, how was I able to do any labor? So they said: "So then, don't let the old man cook rice for you to eat. Don't let him cook rice for you. You are sick; so you cook and wait on him." They told me to wait on my husband so I won't get sick. That is right; they wanted me to get up and cook while I was sick. How could I cook, when I was shivering with malaria fever? I was not able to get up. How was I then able to get up and do the labor? They took me to have a meeting with them; so I said that I was sick. When I was sick I would sleep. When I was not sick, I would be up and around. They interrogated me for a long time, for about two hours; then they took me back home. When they took me back, I was starved, I was very hungry. I had a wide rim hat made from the palm leaves. I did not know what happen, but I always had a fever. I took the hat and put it on, and went to look for the *phtii ach koo* (kind of green leafy vegetable) to boil and make some soup. They were angry with me again. They said that I was sick, but I walked around and looked for the *phtii ach koo* to cook and was able to eat too. I boiled them with salt.

Q. Only your hands hurt, right? But your feet did not hurt?

A. My feet did not hurt, and my body did not hurt either; but I had a fever because it was caused by the fact my foot was hit by the feet mortar and pestle and it was swollen, and it was not completely well yet. They made me go pick the cotton

while I was sick. I was walking around and picked cotton; the big ants bit me, and I had a fever again. This time I had a fever again. Well, the village chief who was in charge of me came to see me. He came and ate at my hut. As for me, I was lying down shivering with fever; he could check and see whatever he wanted to, I was sick, you see, so he called a physician to come and give me an injection. He sent a physician to give me an intravenous injection and I was cured.

Q. That medicine, was it good? Or was it a medicine in a Pepsi bottle?

A. No, the medicine was in a small bottle. It looked like a kind of medicine that could make us well. The bottle was about this long. He just gave me a small injection. The injection cured me. You see, in the countryside, we did not have too many medicines for injection; we did not have too many We didn't have any medicines or any physicians. So, when I got the injection, I was cured; the fever was gone. I was able to go do the labor like everybody else. When I was able to go do the labor, I just went with the other people. Now that I went to another village, I was sick again. I had a fever again. The fever went on and on. I always had a fever and I was shivering with fever, on and on. At that time, the military went around and dug canals. There were many units. They said: "Hey, this old lady knows how to cut the hair. She is sick. She is able to get up and eat. She is no good. This old lady is no good." They probably intended to do me harm. That day, I went down to the ground level from the hut, but they forbid me to go down. I didn't know what the trouble was, I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know what was going on at all. Their house was big, but they did not let me stay there. They made me stay in the kitchen near the stove. I was curling around like . . . well, I was just . . . it was difficult, but I was sleeping the way I found comfortable. I slept in the kitchen. I went to the ground, and they were on both sides of the steps, one here and the other one there. They told me not to go down; they were standing there. I asked them why they didn't let me go down, and that I was feeling hot since I had a fever, that I was going down the hut to feel cool. They said that when I went down, I would flee. So I said: "How can I flee when I am going down? I live here. If I flee, well then, I have . . . you know? If I were to flee, I would rather die. I won't flee." Afterwards, I knelt down, I prayed to all the *Thevadas* (male angels) with my palms joined and complained to them. I said to the Khmer Rouges: "My sons, all of you, if you want to kill me, please go ahead, and I am very contented to die, because I am not feeling downhearted. I don't wish that you will pay for your crimes either in the after life will have karma either. Your sons want to kill me, and I do nothing wrong. I don't know what is going on at all. I am sick and this is a normal sickness. I am not angry with all of you at all. If all of you, sons, kill me, I am very content because I do nothing wrong. Besides, I don't know what is going on. I am sick, you see, and I want to come down so that I will feel cooler." My small child walked behind me; my old man walked behind me too. Well, you see, I had a fever and I went down to cool off and rest, so I said: "My sons, please

go ahead and kill your mother. I am very content to die. As soon as I said that, they all backed away. They all backed away immediately. They all walked away. I went up the hut to rest and sleep some more. I was lying down and covered myself up, when all of a sudden, one of them went upstairs and greeted me with his palms joined and put his hands on the floor and up several times (as a form of respect to the monks and Buddha) at my feet.

Q. Was it your son who greeted you like that?

A. No, that was not so, not my son. It was the unit's chief, who was going up there and greeted me like that. My old man said: "Hey, hey, look, the *Antit* (a man left the monkhood - for bandit, a wise man) is greeting you." I said: "Please don't greet me like this." He said that he wanted to have me as his adopted mother. So I said that he asked me this favor right there and then, well, it could not be done, because the chief forbid us to have adopted mother or sons and daughters; we will have to inform the chief first; I told him that I was very afraid to grant his wish and that I didn't dare do this. I told him: "My nephew, I will ask them first; when you want me to be your stepmother, I will have to ask the chief for the permission first. If the chief permits me to have a relation with you then I will not dare do it." So, in the evening, I went to have my head shaved; I shaved all my hair; when I got back I told him: "My nephew, now, they let me . . ." I asked the chief: "There is a young man asking me to be his adopted mother; would you permit me to have a relation with him?" He said: "Grandma, go ahead and have a relation with him, it is all right." So, he let me have a relation with the young man. I didn't have any problems any more. So I would not have any more problems; there will not be any more problems. But I was still frightened. I would not stop being frightened. I was still afraid of them. Every time I heard that they held a meeting, I always thought that I would not live. I always thought along that line. I don't know why I was like that, but that was the way I felt.

Q. How was the meeting conducted? Did they hold meetings every day?

A. No, they held a meeting probably once, twice, or three times a week. They held a work assignment meeting; they assigned us to a certain labor and place. This old lady worked here, doing this; like for myself, my assignment was to weave some mats and they had me weave some and those who had to dig the canals would do them.

Q. Have they ever taken the people to be reeducated? What kind of counseling did they give them?

A. The meetings were intended to reeducate the people, but I did not know that they were set up to do that. They taught us to be honest to tell the truth, not to tell lies and be dishonest to their organization and party; they used the word party and I

can still remember it some of the words. I do not forget all of the words because they called us to the meetings very often. When the meeting began, they would talk about the reeducation. Well, for me, this is what happened. When they had many issues to discuss and the meeting went on and on. I would hang my head against the wall by nodding. Well, you see, the meeting went on until one or two o'clock in the morning and I was sleepy and exhausted. You see, I was skinny; I had nothing to eat except the porridge, therefore, I was tired and I was sitting but nodding. "Whom were they asking, Grandma *Chea*?" someone was asking. A man fell to the ground with a thud. Well, you go ahead and fall, they didn't care. When you got up, they asked you some more questions. When we went back to our huts, some people asked me: "Well, Grandma *Chea*, did you understand what they said at the meeting?" I said: "I don't really know, I don't know, I was busy nodding." You are a water buffalo in the creek. They asked me: "A water buffalo in the creek." I said: "How about a creek? I don't know what a creek mean?" The Khmer Rouge scolded us and taught us not to betray the organization, to be honest to the organization. They said a buffalo in a creek, I don't know where the creek was, I didn't see any creek, I was busy nodding, I don't know what creek, I don't know anything about it. They said, a water buffalo grazed grass in a creek; what did it mean? I don't really know.

Q. What did they mean by: "the water buffalo grazes grass in a creek"?

A. I don't know, I don't really know, they did not tell me. This was what they said to me; I still don't know what they meant either. How do I know anything about the water buffalo in the creek if I was busy nodding?

Q. After you become the adopted mother, did the Khmer Rouge ever mistreat you any more?

A. After I became his adopted mother, we were separated. He went away and lived in his village which was quite far away. He went to the lower land of Cambodia, and he disappeared. He left, and we were separated. The Khmer Rouge evacuated me from that village once more to another village which was far away. When we finished planting some rice in a village, and the rice plants were stored in a barn, they would evacuate us to another place and made us plant some vegetables; I don't know where the village was. When I went to that place, I was disoriented, and lost my sense of direction. I was like a crazy person. I went to a new village and planted some vegetables and crops there. I was starved at that place; I ate the bare minimum until the rice grew. I was used to growing long stalk rice but they made me grow short stalk rice, about this long, called *bey tek* rice. When we had to pull out the rice seedlings, we had to sit down to do it. I was used to long rice seedlings and big bundles, but with this kind of rice, the seedlings were short, and we sat on our haunches and pulled the rice seedlings which were short, and were just a bit above the water. We transplanted the

seedlings, and the rice kernels came out, they were short; the grains were plump. They had long and short grain rice. Our rice bore good grains, you know; we were able to grow and store quite a bit of rice you know. As for the heavy rice, we were able to grow quite a bit of it. We stored it and filled up a small barn. They made us grow rice and they pushed us very hard. We were pushed to work hard even though the plane flew above us that did not matter. We were supposed to try hard to harvest the rice and sow the seeds. We worked very hard transporting the harvest. We did not sleep at night. They made us fan the rice, and the dust was flying around, getting in our noses, and we would take our scarves to block it from our noses. We had to push the husks and pushed them and swept them. When we went home, we had to take a bath in the middle of the night. They did not mistreat us, but we did some labor with the people. We helped the Khmer Rouge do the labor. They made us do it and we did it so it will be finished in a hurry. It was too exhausting to do that kind of labor.

- Q. Was it not true that they did mistreat you in a way because they made you do the labor which was too exhausting for you, and there were not enough food for you either?
- A. I don't know if they mistreated us when they did that. Maybe we had to do this fast so that we will get to eat the crop sooner too, I really don't know. I don't know; I don't know that they mistreated us either. But this much I know: it was just that they did not allow me to see my son. I did not see my son. I missed my son very much. I did not mind very much if I didn't have much to eat. I always missed my son. I felt sorry for my only child and he was gone, he was missing, I could not find him. When I went to sleep, I was thinking about him and missing him; I was always missing him. I could not eat the porridge because I missed my son. I could not eat it. Every time they gave me a ration of porridge, I would give it to my husband. As for my son, I did not see him around, oh dear me. This is the reason why when I came here to the US, the mere fact that I saw a man and his wife are together along with their children, made me cry. What did I see that made me cry? I saw that a woman was with her husband, that she had a husband with her, therefore I . . . things turned in my head and my being.
- Q. Have you ever seen the Khmer Rouges torture other people?
- A. I have never seen them kill the people. I was lucky that I have never seen that. If I have witnessed them kill the people, I don't really know how I would take that. I would be frightened. I may have gone crazy I guess. But when I was evacuated from Phnom Penh, I have seen the Khmer Rouge did this once. I saw them walk the people in a file in the road, heading somewhere far away from the road, going deep into the fields, forest, away from the road. My hut was near the water, near the creek. First I just had my hut built nearby. Other people's houses were big, but my hut was still kind of small. I liked to live in a small hut, close to the

ground. Well, then, the Khmer Rouge walked the people in groups everyday, taking them from Phnom Penh somewhere. I don't really know where they were taken to, or where they were stationed. When we were being evacuated first, this was what I saw. Later on, I learned that the people were taken to different locations to do the labor, and they were grouped into units. I don't really know where they were taken to. Sometimes, I met some people whom I happened to know; for example, I met some people who used to be in the military, but these people were in disguise so the Khmer Rouge would not find out about them. After awhile, they separated all of us into different groups going to different directions. I don't know where they were taken to. They gave these people porridge. Oh, these people did hard labors and they were exhausted. They were forced to carry dirt and they just comply. As for me, I was exhausted too, other people were also exhausted, we all did hard labors. We all carried dirt, we all break up the ground. We carried the dirt, and dug the canals. They were separated from our group, and I don't know where they have gone to, but I have never seen them kill the people. I did not see them club people in front of me either. Other people have seen them do the killings, but as for me, I was kind of lucky. I have never seen them club or kill the people. Talking about this matter, I have not witnessed it.

Q. Grandma, have you heard other people talk about it? How did the Khmer Rouge kill the people?

A. Of course, I always heard about it. I heard that they took the people to be killed, or to be beaten to death. I have heard that they took both the mothers and the children or whoever they wanted to kill in ox carts and killed them. These events always happened. I have heard about this, but I have not seen it done. I have not witnessed it with my own eyes. I am telling you the truth, I am not lying to you. I don't know how they killed the people, I did not dare step on the Khmer Rouge's toes, ask the people about it or be inquisitive. I was afraid of them. The way the people died was . . . sometimes, two or three persons were dead, piled on top of one another, you know. I was not sure whether or not they were beaten to death. Some people were ordered to dig their own grave, you see. I heard the villagers talk about it. I have not seen it myself. They were forced to dig their own graves; it may be that they were ordered to go down, or they could be beaten, then pushed inside, I don't know. I did not dare inquire about it. This was all I heard about. I was frightened. I was scared and kept it to myself; I was shaken with fear, therefore I did not want to hear about it. I was so scared every time and even now when I talk about it, I am frightened and I feel shaken with fear again. I was frightened and I was afraid, very afraid. One time, I was sick. They said: "Grandma, if you are very seriously ill, we will put a skull at your feet." I had a fever which was getting worse when I heard this. You see, I am afraid of ghosts. I was very frightened, I said to myself: Oh Buddha, when am I going to get well? Oh, dear me. When will I be able to go to work? I will be so afraid if they put a

skull at my feet. At that time, I was sicker than before.

Q. Did the ghosts or spirits ever haunt you?

A. Talking about ghosts, to tell you the truth, I am not lying to you, I was very afraid of them, I was extremely afraid of ghosts. I even close the tiniest cracks in the hut. When there was someone who died in a house, I would not go to that house for one whole month. When my husband died, I did not stay at that place. I was afraid. I really don't know why I was so afraid of ghosts. I was extremely afraid of them when I was ill. When I was older, the ghosts have never haunted me, but when I was younger, it happened to me. I walked to the rice fields at noon time, when all of a sudden I heard a noise as though something fell with a thud, and the water was splashing; I was looking for the thing but I could not find it. I went home. It only happened to me once. The sound was like that of a ripe coconut which fell off the tree, you know. At the time, I was extremely frightened. I thought a ghost was haunting me, I guessed. I ran home as fast as I could. It was harvest time too. It only happened to me just that once. At that time, I already had my children; I was already 30 years old, you know. I was not young when the ghost haunted me. I guessed the ghost haunted me, up to now, nothing like this ever happened to me again. I was always afraid on and on until I got sick. My arm was sprained and is in a bad shape up to now. This was ever since I was 30 years old. I fell off a monk's dining hall, and my hand was very swollen. I went to a folk doctor for treatment and the swelling went down. When my arm got well, my eyes were still sticky and watery and had a blurry vision. I was always very tired. There was an old man who was sick. He lived near me, and someone recited the *Kaw Wota* Buddhist scriptures used for the last rites. My grandfather said: "You sleep here." I said: "I am going to recite the *Kaw Wota*, grandpa." Before the fall of Cambodia, I had a daughter-in-law. The old man said: "Let the bandit sleep near me." Bandit means the one who left the monk hood. Then I dared sleep with him (the sick man) and slept there. If not, I did not dare sleep there; he was about to die, and I was still afraid, you see. My child came over and slept near me. The monks recited the Buddha's scriptures for the old man. They recited the *Kaw Wota*, saying *Wiphaeng Kako*. This prompted me to think. I reflected like this: we human beings, our flesh is cheaper than the cow's meat, you know. People dare to eat cow's meat. As for us humans, people cannot even eat our flesh anywhere whatever part of our body. I reflected this. The old man died, as for me, I was better. I always thought and reflected this: Oh! people used even cow manure for fertilizers to be used in the rice fields. They were useful. People eat the cow meat. The cow's meat is also useful. All of the cow's body parts are useful. As for us human beings, we are not useful. I reflected this: Oh, I am surely like cow's meat. After reflecting this, I felt as if I had more energy. Then, I was not afraid of the ghosts anymore. I stopped being afraid of the ghosts ever since that time. When the old man San died the people carried his body by me, and I was not afraid of the ghosts anymore; I was not afraid of the ghosts from that

time on. That was how I reflected. Before I was afraid of the ghosts, but after my reflections I was feeling fine; I was cured. I am talking about the *Sangkum* Prince *Sihanouk's* time, when I was afraid of the ghosts.

- Q. During the *Pol Pot* time, was your son living with you?
- A. My small children have all died, I only had a son left, and he went to live at the children's unit. The Khmer Rouge organized the children into units. They made the children dig canals. He has never come to live with me. My son went with the unit. I don't know how much they have mistreated him. I have no way of knowing this. He went to live and do the labor far away from my village. I stayed in the village. I don't know whether or not they mistreated him. Once in a while, he would sneak and run away from the unit, but he was unable to run away. When he ran away, they caught him, and took him back. He could not come to stay with me. Once in a while, he was able to get a permission to come and visit me. Whenever I had something, I always tried to send it to him via the neighbor's children who happened to come by, so that he would have something to eat.
- Q. How did the Khmer Rouge mistreat you and the Cambodian people mentally and physically?
- A. As for the Cambodian people, they went to live in the units, and I have never heard about their well being at all. In my village, there were only old ladies who lived there. I stayed with old ladies. They had some of the old ladies babysit for the children; some others were told to weave, while others were made to weave mats. It depended on the units. If an old lady could not work because she was sick, then they would take her to be treated. If someone feigned sickness, that person would be mistreated or tortured. For example, they would scold that person and they did not give him or her the rice ration. They said that this person tried to evade work. This was all that they would say. They did not beat or curse this person; they only took him or her to be reeducated.
- Q. Which one was more serious: mental or physical mistreatment?
- A. In my opinion, physically. I suffered a great deal, but my heart was feeling small, tinier than a needle, because I did not dare talk, I did not dare say anything, I did not dare complain. I was reflecting to myself and thought while contemplating the sky and the stars: what country can I escape to, in order to run away from all of this misery? How can I run away and escape? How can I if I am not able to run away at all? I don't know the way. I don't know which way to go. If I were to leave, I cannot leave. The *Khmers Rouges* are everywhere, all over the place; now, how can I leave? The only way left for me to do is to die. I only thought about going to do the labor. When the time comes for me to die, I will die. If I were to live, then I would be alive. If I had something to eat, it was all right. If I

had nothing to eat, then let it be. I did not think about anything else. This was all that I thought about. The only thing I thought about was my son. I missed my son. When I lay down, I thought about my son. I always thought about him. The only thing I thought about was whether or not he was still alive or dead. This was all that I thought about; this thought was in my mind, my heart. I am a sincere person. I would not know about other people. I thought to myself: Oh, the only time that could help keep my son or me alive was the merit; it could also help me to go to another country where the people are generous and good. I was then able to go and seek asylum there, and therefore I will be able to survive. But in Cambodia, the situation was such a disaster. The Khmer Rouge did not beat me up, but this was what I thought in my mind. This was what I thought, that is the reason why I say There was another old lady who said the same thing. She said: "What can we do grandma? We talked to each other in whisper. Grandma, what are we going to do when we are suffering so much? "Oh, grandma," I said, "I don't know what to do either, grandma. It is a hardship, but we will just have to do the labor. In the old days, we used to have rice, and water to eat, our own house, our own money. But now, they put them in the collectives, we will just have to eat that way, and we will have to wait until we get old. Grandma, I don't know what to do." We always talked to each other like this. I always tried to work hard. I didn't dare let them hear our conversation. We always talked in a whisper. I never talked about them. I never said anything. I didn't dare say anything. I didn't dare talk at all even though it was night time, and everything was still and quiet. I just went to sleep from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. when I got up. I didn't even get up often enough to go to relieve myself. I slept the whole night through when I slept in my hut. When I went with the unit and there were many people around, then I dared get up and relieve myself. When I slept at home, I didn't dare get up in the middle of the night, because I was afraid of the militia who was under me or at the side of my hut listening and spying on me.

Q. What was he doing underneath the hut?

A. Well, you know, he stayed there to listen to us. If we said something wrong, they would drag us out in the middle of the night. At night, we did not dare say anything at all. We only talked about good things, using good words. We didn't dare use bad offensive words. In my opinion, I would say that the mental suppression was very much. As for the physical, whatever they made us do, we would just do it. Physically, we suffered too; physically, we suffered, yes, they made us do difficult labors. Mentally, we suffered much more than physically; mentally, it was a hardship.

Q. What were the experiences that you have met, and that you thought were the most difficult to deal with?

A. The time when I was sick, and when I dug canals in *Ang Ta Saom* Town, around the forest area. They took me to dig the canals. I also dug the canals in the

district, and the village. They made me dig a canal in a place; when it was finished, they made me go to another place and dig another one. You see, they moved me from one place to another, from one village to another. I didn't get to stay in one place at all. They made us dig the canal from the morning until 11:00 a.m., when they allowed us to go up and eat lunch. They let us rest, and take a bath. Afterwards, they made us start to carry the dirt and three or four hours later, they allowed us to go out and eat dinner. At night, they made us carry more dirt. When we had to carry dirt in buckets suspended from a pole across the shoulders, or between two people, I would use a basket. Someone held on to one side, and I would hold on to the other side. I would close my eyes. When the time came for us to throw the dirt from the basket, both of us should throw it all together. When the person at the other end threw it, I would let my hand go. I didn't throw it, I just let my hand go, I was exhausted. People didn't like to work with me. They got mad at me; they didn't like me. They did not like the way I just let my hand go like that. They wanted me to throw the dirt, and I would let my hand go. When people went to dig the ground, I just sat and closed my eyes. They called me to go and lift the basket. They told me to throw the dirt, and I would let my hand go. I was exhausted. The Khmer Rouge made me do the labor in the mornings and the afternoons, so I was tired. I had a hard time carrying the dirt. I was sick, and my body had no energy to do the labor for them. For this reason, I suffered very much. Besides, my husband and my son were separated from me. My husband stayed at home, and I would go along with the unit. As for my son, he went along with his own unit. When I ate and slept, I did it on the ground. Whoever had a hammock would sleep in a hammock. I had no hammock, so I slept on the ground.

- Q. Did they have any mat to put on the ground?
- A. Whoever would carry a mat along? We slept in the forest which was quite far away. We might have a plastic sheet which we would put on the ground; when we had a towel or a blanket, we would use it to cover ourselves. The blankets were not like the ones from our region, they were locally made. Those who had the energy would carry mats with them; some others would take along the hammocks. I had no hammock, so I slept on the ground.
- Q. In the Communist regime, what were the moments when you were the happiest?
- A. For me, it didn't look like there was any happy moment at all. They took me to see a play done by the children. They let me go to watch it at night; they called me to go and see the play. The play had dances and songs and people had a good time, but I could not have any fun. I didn't have a good time. When I thought about the situation, I was sad and unhappy. I remembered taking a scythe, and a big knife to harvest and cut the rice stalks. I didn't have a good time, but I didn't dare say anything. I didn't say that I was happy, nor did I say that I was unhappy. I always remained silent, and kept things in my mind. For me, the time the Khmer

- Q. Rouges come in to take power, and soon afterwards, I didn't have a good time, no. I was not happy, not even for one day.
- A. They stayed at their hubs. I have never gone to their hubs. After we finished our
- Q. Did they ever let you rest? How many days in a week did they allow you to rest?
- A. You know, they did let us travel. They let us rest; for example, when they held a meeting, for one, two or three days, they would let us rest. It all depended on the time. Sometimes they would be very lenient, while other times they would be strict. They would have a rest day and hold a party. But when they let us rest, they didn't let us stay at home. They let us have a day off so we could go to a meeting. When they said that today we would have a day off, we would have to make a dessert to eat; and we would have to help them make it. This made me even sleepier. When we made the desserts, we couldn't sleep, and I was even more exhausted. When we had a day off, we were even more exhausted. When people made the desserts, I was sitting and nodding. I was always sneaking away to sleep because I was sleepy.
- Q. In your village, did the Khmer Rouge divide the people into old or new people? Were the lives of the new and old people the same?
- A. Yes they did. Sometimes, they would allow the new people stay in that house too. Sometimes, they had them cook too. It all depended on the circumstances. Sometimes they made the old people work in the kitchen; so sometimes they had all new people go do the labor in the rice fields and all the old people stay in the village. It all depended on the circumstances.
- Q. What were the new people? And what were the old people?
- A. I don't understand what they meant by the new people. Some people used to stay at home and have never lived near the market place. As for me, I lived near the market place and was called a new person. Those people who have never lived near the market place and stayed in the farm all the time were called old people. Those people who lived in Phnom Penh city or in the cities and who came from the countryside like me, I used to live in *Ang Roka*, and who were evacuated from the cities were called the new people. Those people who stayed in the house, and in the village were called old people, or the people of April 17 when the Khmer Rouge invaded Cambodia and took power. I don't know what April 17 means; I don't know what to call this date.
- Q. Were the rice rations for the old and new people the same?
- A. I saw both kinds of people eat at the *Kouseen*; the rations looked the same to me. I didn't know how different they were.

Q. Did the old people receive additional rations?

A. They stayed at their huts. I have never gone to their huts. After we finished our labors, we would go to our huts, not to theirs, no we didn't; after we returned from our labors, we would go to the "Cuisine." After we left the Cuisine, we would go to our own place; they would go to their place. We have never had a relationship. How could we go and have a relationship with them? We were afraid of them. We didn't dare. How could we go around and look for something or visit anybody, when it was almost time to go out to do the labor again? When we went to sleep, we slept in rows in the hall, like we were at the hospital, all in a row, next to one another, how could we get up and look for anybody? When we got up, it was only to relieve ourselves, not to talk to anybody. The only time we talked would be at the meeting when they told us to dig the ground at a certain place, or do the labor at another place; then we were able to talk. If we were gathering and talking and sitting, they would say that we had an issue to discuss in a meeting, and they said that we betrayed them. So, then, as soon as I . . . I was used to this life style all my life. As soon as I finished dinner, I crawled to my mat to sleep. I did not dare go anywhere. I didn't know about anything. Whatever other people had to eat, go ahead and eat it. They could talk about whatever they wanted to. All I knew was to close my eyes. All I wanted was security. I knew nothing. Other people had company and they would walk around. I had no company. There were five people in each group to dig the canal, sometimes there were six of us. We just dug the canal. Some people slept on their hammocks and I slept on the ground; that was all. Sometimes, people cooked sweet sticky rice to eat at night and they would wake me up to eat it. I didn't eat it. I was sleeping. I was busy having diarrhea. I didn't eat with them. I didn't eat at night. I have never gone to join them when they met like this. I never dared to do that. I always closed my mouth shut. I always grew the *kapok* tree (Kapok in Cambodian is Kor which is a synonym of being unable to talk). This was the reason why they usually did not mistreat me; it was because I sewed my mouth shut this way. I always sewed it. I thought to myself it sure was a fight for me and I didn't dare talk about anything at all. When I saw something, I still said that I did not see anything. Even if I saw someone steal something, and when the Khmer Rouge asked me if I have seen someone steal something, I would say that I have not seen it. When people stole something, let them steal it, they were hungry. I did not tell them what I saw; I did not tell them at all. I did not want any favor. I was afraid myself too. I didn't know about anything at all. This was what I said, that I did not see anything. I was spared.

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 4

- Q. In Pol Pot time, what did the Khmer Rouges order you to do? How was the labor divided among the people?
- A. In that regime, people worked collectively in units. In the youth units, there were many young people. As for the elderly, there were about 10 or 20 people in a place. When we worked, we just worked, and when we got tired, they would let us rest sometimes, and we felt better. Some people were still exhausted because they were too exhausted. At first, they made me tend the gardens. At first, I grew vegetables in the village. Some people raked the ground, while others dug the ground. Others dug ditches, and grew watermelons, pumpkins, and cucumbers. It depended on the day when they wanted you to grow something. My group was able to rest sometimes. After growing cucumbers, and pumpkins, they made us do . . . I don't quite remember; I'm demented, very forgetful. I don't know what comes first and what comes next. I am feeling lost. What I am telling you is topsy turvy, you see, so please excuse me. It is not going smoothly. I did do some labor, but I forgot all about it. After that, they made me weave palm leave mats. Some old ladies would cut the leaves off, and other ladies would weave the mats. When we wove the mats, we had little time to rest. When we had to eat, then we got to rest a little bit. If not, we could only rest when we chewed the betels. We all would chew betels and we could have some time off from 7:00 am to noon it all depended on the circumstances. I didn't know the time, you see. That was what I heard from the people. I didn't know what time it was at all. When it was noon time, they would ring the bell for lunch. When we heard the bell, we would stop working and go to look for some rice to eat.
- Q. Did you cook rice yourself?
- A. They let us eat in the halls. Their halls were long. They put food for us to eat in a circle; we ate in the circles. As for me, I had my old man at home, so I brought food for him at home. I ate with other people. My son was at the unit.
- Q. Did you have enough food to eat?
- A. As for the food in the village, sometimes people would go and try to catch some fish. The Khmer Rouge ordered some people to go and catch fish along the creeks and the lakes. There were separate groups of people who went fishing. They caught fish for us to eat. There were some fish, but they were not enough. In the village, where they made us weave the mats. There were some soups made from vegetables and some smelts which people caught in the nets. Every two or three days, they would make some soup with pork, and beef. I don't really know where they got these meats from. I just saw them bring the meats and made some

soups for us to eat. I didn't know about this. I was busy going to do the labor. I didn't know where they took the food from. I only saw that they gave us meat once a week regularly. They always had vegetables as a routine. You see, our country has plenty of fish, such as Anchoat fish. People caught some fish, but they were not as bountiful as when we could catch them individually. They were just enough for us to live on. Sometimes, they caught some smelts and they used them to make some soup with the water lily stalks. Sometimes they made me go and pull out some water lily stalks. Sometimes, I went to look for the water lilies in the morning and got back after they finished eating lunch. When I had to go find some water lilies, I would pull them by using a scythe to pull them. I didn't know how to go into the water. I used the scythe to hook them then I would pull them toward me. They were floating all over the pond. I would sit and take the leaves off. I would file them up until I got a lot of them before I carried them in the baskets across my shoulders. I had to carry them in two baskets each time. Sometimes, they wanted me to pull as many water lilies as it would take me two trips to carry them, and they would help me carry them. Sometimes, I only had to carry them in one trip. This was the same when they made me go cut the *phtii* (vegetables). I would carry them in two or three trips. Well, I was not very energetic but I just went all the same. I just went and stood in the water. I had no energy, besides I was skinny. I couldn't eat very much rice. They did not mistreat me, but that was the labor which I did. They have never beat me, or scolded me using abusive words. I am not lying to you.

Q. Did you get enough food to eat?

A. At first they cooked rice and they rationed it to us. They rationed two ladles of rice to each of us. I could not finish all of it. I ate a small amount of food. I gave a ladle of rice to my old man, and I took a ladle of rice. Their ladles were big. Each ladle of rice was equal to a plateful. When they did not cook regular rice, they would cook sweet sticky rice and ration it to us. When they cooked sweet sticky rice, I could not eat it, so I just ate a little bit of sticky rice. I just took it to my old man and grilled it for him to eat. As for the meals made with pork and beef, we got to eat them once a week. For those who ate a lot, they did not have enough to eat, but for me, I had enough because I ate very little. I said that the food was not enough, but I had enough to eat. I had enough because I ate very little. I said that the food was not enough, but I had enough to eat. I had enough to eat, because when I went back home, I would fumble here and there for something to fill up my stomach until I am full. My mouth was full, but my stomach was still hollow. My stomach was not as bloated as it is now. Now, my stomach is bloated, but my mouth is still hungry. At that time, my mouth was full, but my stomach was hollow. When I swallowed, the food would not go in. I can say that it tasted good, but it didn't taste good. Oh my Lord, please forgive me, please don't let me have any sin. This depended on the day. Well, if they made sweet and sour soup one time, or one day, it tasted good, but the way it

tasted good, that food . . . oh, and besides I was sick too, I guess. Well, one time was just like the other time. Sometimes when they were able to make sugar, they would ration it to us. When we grew watermelons and got a good crop, they would ration them to us. The mobile units came from another area, and they got to eat those provisions, so we got to eat them because of these people. They would come by and spend one day. So the Khmer Rouge cooked big meals for them. They made one or two big woks full of rice. But if I ate it, one small ball of rice would be enough for me.

Q. Did they give you Saturday and Sunday off? If you were sick, were you able to ask them to stay off work?

A. I did not have any idea when it was Saturday or Sunday. If they held a meeting, then we would have a day off. I did not know when it was Saturday or Sunday. They held a meeting every two weeks or once a month. We would have a day off that day. When they did not have a meeting, we did not have a day off; there would be no day off.

Q. Were you able to stay home and have a day off?

A. We had a day off so I could go to the meeting. For example, if we had a meeting the next day, the next morning, we did not go to work. We must stay home and wait to go to the meeting when we went to the meeting, they have us a labor to do, and the next day we will start on the new labor.

Q. During Pol Pot Regime, how was the relationship between the husband and wife and the children? Were you able to stay together?

A. My son did not get to live with me. My son was small. It was true, but they did not allow him to stay with me. He stayed with other small children in the children's unit. He didn't sleep too far away from our hut. I missed my son, so I always lied down and cried. He was far away from me and he was still small; he was the youngest and he was the only one left. Once in awhile, I asked them for the permission to go visit my son because I missed him very much. When he stayed near me, he ran away to see me after I got back from work. When he went to live far away, he was not able to run away because it was too far for him. He could not make it, so he just followed the crowd.

Q. Did your son sneak away to visit you or did they allow him to go and visit you?

A. He sneaked away. According to the neighbor's children who saw it happen, if the Khmer Rouge found out, they would beat the child, and tie the child up and let him/her stand on the ants nest. The one who told me about this was not my son; my son told me that he did not see that; this was what my son told me. So I took

him: "My son, don't stay too long, honey. I am afraid of them, please go back." I gave him some rice and he ran back. At noon time, he went back right away. He did not dare stay over too long, it was so hot that one might get his/her feet burned when my son left. My son was mistreated once when his foot had a sore. They accused him of being lazy and feigned sickness. The other children told me: "Grandma, at first, Sam Ang was given porridge to eat, but now, his foot is painful. He is not able to go to work, his foot got hit with a hoe. Now he is not able to go to work; so now, they said that he is sick and they said that they will not give him porridge to eat any more, because he is not able to work. I then went over there and asked them the permission to bring my son home. My son was sick, and they did not give him any rice to eat. They said that he could not work. When my son felt better, they called him back. Later on, when they took him back, I followed him and went to visit him once. They took him along with a unit to a forest which was quite far away. I boiled some sweet potatoes and tapioca bulbs and took them along with me for him. After I gave them to him, I came back. Ever since that time, my son was separated from me and was taken to a further and still further place, you know my poor son. When he went to dig the canal in Pork Weak area, he told me: "Mother, when we had a break, I always went around looking for some additional food to eat to fill up my stomach; otherwise, I was not full at all."

- Q. At that time, were the children able to go to school?
- A. They were holding classes. The adults were also taught something. But, I didn't know what they studied or what was being taught or how. I did not go to school like everybody else. They took the children and taught them something, but I didn't know what they studied. I didn't know about it. I was demented. I didn't know how the classes were conducted; there were some schools, you know. At first, before I went to do the labor, they taught me the Cambodian alphabet, but I was not able to learn them or to retain anything. They had me recite them, I didn't know what they meant at all. I was too busy feeling tired, you see. I always sat and nodded.
- Q. Did the children go to school? Did the Khmer Rouge allow them to be in school the whole time?
- A. No, the children went to school. The adults also went to school. I didn't know how long they went to school; could it be months? I am forgetful. I don't remember anything at all. As for me personally, they made me go to school. As for my son, they also made him go to school. As for the classes themselves, I didn't know how many hours they were. They were either half an hour or one hour. I forget about them now. After we ate, we went to school; we both studied and did the harvesting. They also made my son do the harvest. My son was small, and they still made him do the harvest and he went to school. He was not

sent to a far away place yet. When he got older, they made him go to labor; it seemed like there was no place for a school. There were only places for digging the canals. I didn't know where he went to school, it didn't seem like he ever went to school. I went to look for him once when he was digging the canals. I dug the canals, so did he. We did not do it collectively. At meal time, he ate at my dining hall. The same things went for digging the canals. He dug them over there, and I dug them over here. We, mother and son, did not dig the canals at the same place. When the recess came, I ran to see him for a short while.

- Q. How was the relationship between your husband and you?
- A. My old man could not go anywhere. He stayed home with me. When I went to dig the canals, he stayed home alone. At that time, he was 72-73 years old. Then, my son was only about 7-8 years old, because he was still holding my hand and ran naked. After a while, he wore pants all the time. When they sent him far away to do some labor, I made some shorts for him to wear. The Khmer Rouge gave big pants to my son to wear. They sent me to an adult group. My son wore big pants. They sent my son to do labor with the adults. When we got to the labor site, then they would say, "Why do we bring the children along with the adults?" They then sent the children back to their village. After that, my son was able to stay in the children's unit in the village. As for my husband, they made him wind the ropes.
- Q. Did they give you enough food to eat?
- A. They gave my husband a rice ration. They gave him a can full of rice a day for the morning and the evening. As for my rice ration, I gave it to him to eat. I kept my rice to make porridge for him to eat in the future. We had the rice reserve for the starving days. I hid the rice for future use, and I could not eat the rice, I just took the rice, and gave it to him. I looked around for some leaves or other leafy vegetables to supplement the food, and it would be enough. Once a week, they gave us sour soup. As for the sour soup, it was in name only. There were too many people, you see, what could they do? When they made me do the harvest or weave the mats, than I was able to be with my husband. When I went to dig the canals, then we did not live together. I went to dig the canals with other people in the units. He stayed in the village. My son went to another place, and I went to another place with the unit. I would be gone for four or five days, or two weeks before I was able to come home once. But, I always asked them for the permission to go home. About every ten days, I asked them for the permission to come and see him once. He was sick of old age.
- Q. Was he sick because of starvation?
- A. My old man was not starved. His body ached because he was old. He ate very

little. He did not starve like everybody else, because he ate very little. For example, a can of rice for the morning and the evening, was enough for him. He could not even finish that. He was skinny. He could not even herd the cows. He was deaf. He always had diarrhea which made him skinny. Besides, he ate a small amount of rice. I didn't know why he ate so little. I couldn't say why. They rationed rice to us. Well, now, for example, if it were our rice . . . but, sometimes, I sneaked and cooked rice for him in the morning, the rice which was rationed to him. I hid the rice, and cooked it for him to eat in the morning. I gave some of it to him to eat at about 4 a.m., before the Khmer Rouge were able to catch him. Then, at meal time, when they gave his portion to bring, I would take it home for him to eat.

Q. Have they ever made porridge and mixed it with banana trunks, papaya trunks or other leaves?

A. They mixed the porridge with tapioca plants and bananas.

Q. At the time, was there any hygiene? Were there any body soaps, laundry detergent, or tooth brushes?

A. No, I have never seen them. I have never had a tooth brush. I did not have body soap. There were only *Ancanh* leaves (a kind of leaf), and some soaps, left over from the Sangkum era which I kept. There were just a few. I just used kapok leaves and some ashes — I just squeezed them together with some water and strained it to get the clear liquid to wash my hair to get the dirt off. When I went to take a bath, I just picked a handful of kapok leaves, squeezed them with some water in a water bowl, and washed my hair. As for my body, I had nothing to wash it with. I only used the water to clean it.

Q. Did you all have a lot of lice?

A. Oh, of course, we had lice. I always saw people sit and crush them to death between their nails. Every time, they had a recess, they always crushed the lice between their nails. As for me, I washed my hair with the ashes. Besides, I seldom slept with other people. Sometimes, a few would find their way to my head, and I would just wash my hair with ash again. When I washed my hair with the ash, the lice didn't seem to come back either; it could be that the ash was salty, I guessed, and their eggs were probably dried up. I always washed my hair with the ash and it was all right. I took the ash from the stove, about a half a coconut shell, and mixed it with water, and I just took the clear liquid and washed my head. The people who had long hair would just crush the lice between their finger nails. Especially my niece, my brother's daughter. She put a banana leaf on the ground, and she would comb her hair, and the lice would just fall off the hair — whoosh! This made me cringe. There were so many lice, you know; her name

was Strom. There were so many lice that her mother cut her hair so short that she looked like she had a bald head. But it seemed like she did not get rid of them. When her hair was getting long, she will definitely have some more.

Q. Were you free to cook rice on your own?

A. No, we could not cook rice individually. They confiscated all the pots, pans, and dishes. They confiscated all of them. They left nothing for us. I just hid a water bowl, and a pot, and I had a hard time hiding them. I buried them in the ground for my old man. I hid them. The old man had his kettle, and he would not hide it at all, he boiled water all the time. As for me, I hid the pot and a dish for the old man to use for his morning meals. The water bowl did not need anything else; you know, the white water bowl? When I needed to cook the rice, I would use the kind of white water bowl, without a lid of course put the rice in it and cooked it. When it got fluffy and dry, we ate it. I did not have to worry about making porridge or the rice. I did not have to look for any other pot or pan. I did not need to look for some other pot or pan. We were evacuated and while being evacuated, along the way, I also used that pot too. Someone lost it, and it floated on the creek, then, I caught it and was able to use it for cooking. When I didn't have the pot, I always used the water bowl to cook rice. The Khmer Rouge confiscated and put them in a warehouse. They had a kitchen where they stored the dishes. They had some cooks there too. They set up the food as though they were for the monks. We would sit down and eat them in groups sitting in circles. We ate in this manner everyday in the villages. In the units, every time they rang the bell, they had us gathered in groups, and there were people who waited on us. We were in several circles, in the open air; they brought the food to us. Whatever they wanted to give us, they would bring it. I have never cooked on my own freely. They always gave us a ration. Anyway, we did not have time to cook. I would cook the rice which I had leftover. I cooked it in hiding. I would get up and cook it at four o'clock in the morning, you see, which was the time people usually slept. I made the fire and made fire that would not show and give me away, you know.

Q. What did you do so it would not show to the people outside?

A. If it showed, they would arrest me and beat me to death, and I would have been gone. My hut was just a small hut; I took some metal sheets and put around it. The pot was just the water bowl without a lid; when the rice boiled, it did not make any noise. When it was done, I took a thin dish and covered it. I took it off the fire and boiled the water. In case they came over and checked on me, what they saw would be my old man's kettle with boiling water instead! They got out of their houses and came over to check, you see. They got out and came over to see. They open the kettle's lid and drank the water. I already hid my old man's rice; there was not enough rice anyway.

- Q. At the time, how did people get married? Who were the people who arranged the brides and the grooms to be married? Did the parents have the rights to arrange for their sons and daughters to have their wives and husbands?
- A. I went to a wedding ceremony. I was invited to attend the ceremony. I didn't know whether or not the parents arranged the marriage. But what I saw was that they had the couples stand two by two; it was not. . . . I heard people say that there were ten or fifteen couples who were already married. When I attended that ceremony, there were more than ten couples, about thirteen or fourteen couples. Each couple would take turns going to sit side by side, took some vows and held hands. The Khmer Rouge made them take the vows. After the vows, some of them lost their partners because they did not know each other, you see. The groom would go to one side and the bride the opposite side. They had a hard time finding each other.
- Q. What did they do to take the vows?
- A. They took the vows like. . . the bride said it, and the groom said it; but I don't remember the vows, I am sorry. There was also someone who held The authority helped to give the vows. They had the men sit in one row, and the women sit in another row. Then, each couple went up to take the vows. I don't know what they vowed, what they said, because I was sitting and sleepy. I am not very good in remembering things. I was really busy. It was really true. I am not lying.
- Q. Did the people love each other or not?
- A. Some of them would cry and refuse to take their partners. Some of them did really cry and refuse, but how could they refuse? They could not win. The other party wanted them.
- Q. So then if the men wanted to marry the women, the women could not refuse them, is that right?
- A. They could not refuse to take the partners. The Khmer Rouge married them off. If the women wanted the men, the men could not refuse either. Some of them would set themselves free by running away; I don't know what really happened. I can't say anything since I really don't know much about it. At the wedding ceremony, I have not seen the rice cakes, no. The only things I saw were some flowers which they put on the table, and the couples would just take vows.
- Q. Were there any doctors to treat the pregnant women?
- A. They had some doctors. But I don't know whether or not they were the same

doctors who were in the *Sangkum* era, those who were in the old days, but they did have some doctors. You know, the obstetrician. I have never gone to see them. I don't know about it. I only heard people talk about them. When I was sick I went to the doctors, like everybody else too.

- Q. What did the Khmer Rouge use as medicine at the hospitals?
- A. They gave me an injection at home one time. They also gave me white pills to help with the fever. When I was living in that regime, I did not go to the doctor too often. Here, I went to the doctors often. Over there (Cambodia), no matter how ill I was, I was afraid of going to the doctors. I didn't dare to see them.
- Q. Why were you afraid to go to the doctors? What were the reasons?
- A. I was afraid. I don't know why I was always afraid. I was afraid to take the medicines. I have never been very good at swallowing the pills. Whenever I took the medicines, I felt dizzy. I was reacting to them. Therefore I was always afraid to take the medicines.
- Q. What did the women have to do when they had to deliver the babies?
- A. At the time, I was present when my grandchild was born. *Sakhan* was pregnant. She did not go to the hospital to deliver her baby. She had the baby at home. Her husband asked the village chief for permission to stay at home and build a fire for his wife. She stayed home and warmed herself up with the fire underneath the bed and took medicinal herbs at home. They were trees' roots such as the heart wood of the *sdau* (bitter kind of vegetable), the seedy banana's trunk which were then boiled and taken. I really don't know how potent these herbs were. Later on, they asked the Khmer Rouge for medicines from the social service.
- Q. What were the medicines?
- A. They were the herbal medicines which were boiled. I don't really know what kind of medicines they were. I didn't go to visit her too often. I was always called to go here or there or to do the harvesting.
- Q. How long after she delivered the baby was she called to go do the labor? Who were the people who did the baby sitting?
- A. One month after the baby was born, the mother then dared to go do the labor. For those who had complications, they would go back to the labor after one month and a half or two months, and do the harvesting, transplanting the rice seedlings, or walking around. They were not made to do hard labor. They were only told to help do minor labor to help other people. They were not told to harvest the rice.

They were only told to do minor jobs such as tying the seedlings. As for the baby he/she was taken to the elderly ladies to baby sit. For example, the mother would take the baby to the work site, and leave the baby underneath a tree's shade; sometimes the baby was taken to the dining hall. When the baby cried, someone will go get the mother to nurse him/her. This was done when the mother did the labor near the dining hall. If she did the labor a distance from the dining hall, she then took the baby along.

Q. Did the mothers have enough milk to breast feed their babies?

A. I don't know about their babies, you know. I have no idea.

Q. At that time, did women have menstruation?

A. I don't know about them. They lived in their own huts. In the old government, they did have it. I did not think about asking them personal questions like these, you know! I have never asked them this. I never asked them about menstruation.

Q. At that time, did they give the people vaccinations against various diseases?

A. I have forgotten about it. Let's see . . . let me think about it first. It looks like they did.

Q. What kind of vaccinations? Against what diseases? Were the doctors good?

A. No, I don't know. They took us to the medical center and this was what they did: they made slight marks on our arms. When I came back to the hut my arm hurt very much. Some people had a fever when they came back to their huts. Oh! excuse me, I don't really know about this matter too much. I don't know about many things like other people do, because I don't know about other people's business. I only saw that when people were sick, they went to lie down. When I was sick, I went to ask for some medicine. I can't say anything about other people because I don't know about them.

Q. In *Pol Pot's* time, were the people allowed to have Buddhist temples? Were the old folks able to go to the temples?

A. There were temples, but I didn't see any monks. They converted the temples into kitchens. They used them as kitchens and meeting places.

Q. What year did they start to abolish the temples?

A. Oh, when you ask me this way, I am lost. I don't know what year it was. Excuse me, but I am not very good with dates. Even when I came over here, I didn't know about dates. I noticed the date only when it is Saturday. I am not very good with

dates.

- Q. Can you recite the *Dharmas* (Buddhist principles)?
- A. Personally, I have never let anybody hear me recite them, but my old man prayed to Buddha every morning. He was deaf. He would pray to Buddha in the mornings. He prayed like that and the village chief came by and caught him in the act. The chief said, "grandpa, what are you doing?" He answered, "Nephew, do you want to have some tobacco? Well, go ahead and take the tobacco." He was deaf, so the chief asked him two or three times, and he would take the tobacco and give them to the chief. So, the chief said that he was only cursing, that he was only cursing in the morning, and that was all he did. "He was just cursing. Don't do anything to him," they said. The chief said, "He was cursing in the morning, and that was all, he was just cursing. Let him curse; don't mistreat him." My old man prayed to Buddha, and the chief asked him, "Grandpa, what are you doing?" He said, "Grandson, take this tobacco; go on take it, here." He told me, "give him the tobacco." Then the chief and the other Khmer Rouge just laughed and laughed. They said, "He was just cursing; he was only cursing; let's not say anything to him, don't bother him." Then they walked away. As for me, I have never let anybody see me pray. I was praying to Buddha, the *Dharmas*, The *Sangha* (monks), and my parents everyday. Sometimes, some days, I was so tired that I forgot to do it. I was exhausted, I was hungry, I forgot to pray and I went to sleep. Sometimes, my old man told me, "Say prayers to Buddha." I did not do it, because I was sleeping once more. It was not like now, you know. Now, I pray to Buddha all the time.
- Q. If the Khmer Rouge heard the people recite the *Dharmas*, what would they do?
- A. I guess they would mistreat us, I think. They didn't like it, because I shaved my head, and they told me not to do it (shaving the head is a symbol of Buddhist nuns). I liked to shave my head. They did not allow me to shave it. They said, "Don't shave your head. It does not look nice." So, I didn't shave my head.
- Q. What did the Khmer Rouge do to the Buddha statues and the temples? Did they allow the people to hold Buddhist ceremonies every year?
- A. One day I asked a man, "Uncle, where have they taken all the Buddha statues to?" He said, "Oh! Grandma, you don't know? They took them to *Tram Khna* (a district near the capital)." But, you see, they were playing tricks on me because I did know about the statues. So I did not say anything else since then up to now. Then an old lady whisper to me, "Grandma, go to the pond and look. It is full of Buddha statues." I did not dare say anything; I was really frightened. I said, "Gosh! They put the statues in the water! If they put the statues in the water like this, the statues will suffocate!" The people said, "Grandma, you are crazy. How can the statues suffocate? Buddha statues don't breathe, you see?" They took the

Buddha statues and put them in there, so I thought to myself, "Oh! I am scared." I did not dare ask the man any more questions because I was afraid that they would mistreat me. I did not dare ask the man any more questions. At that time, they did not allow us to have religion. They did not allow us to have the monks either. As for the Buddhist ceremonies, such as the *Phcum Ben* (paying homage to the ancestors), no, we did not have them. During the *Phcum Ben* ceremony, they would make rice cakes, but I didn't know what kind of celebration they had, I can not say the name of their celebration. I only saw that they made rice cakes and shared them. They went to make . . . they held a meeting, I don't really know for sure, because I don't know how to say the name of the celebration. I am not very good at talking either. But during *Phcum Ben* season, for example, they would make rice cakes and distribute them to us; we would get two, three or one each, according to the size of the household. My old man, my son, and I got two rice cakes. They had a celebration for one day and one night. They held it at the pagoda. I don't know what they called this celebration. I don't know about it. After the meeting, they cooked some food and ate it.

- Q. At that time, what did they teach the people about communism?
- A. When we went to the meetings, they told us not to betray them, not to betray the *Angka* (the Organization) or the Party. We must do labor actively. They did not mean to say this to us, elderly people, we just sat and listened. At the meeting, they would talk about the changes in labor. For example, they wanted us to go and dig the canals over here, or go to build a dam over there. They gave the work directions. The young people would be determined to do the labor. I can't recall everything. I would sit and nod. Excuse me, I don't remember about the meeting. When they asked me, I didn't know about the labor which they imposed on me, so they said that I was a buffalo in the creek. I was always nodding. After a short while my head would bang this way, and a while later, it would bang that way. It was sore, you know. I thought to myself, "Go ahead and hold a meeting if they want to, but I am exhausted and I don't care about anything now." The only thing I was caring about was to nod; therefore, excuse me, I don't remember much about what was said in the meeting.
- Q. How did they exercise their control over the people?
- A. The laborers were very afraid of them. For example, when they gave them labor to do, they had to do it. They did not dare evade it. Even when they were a little bit sick, they would still get up and go do the labor. They did not dare to be soft, unless they were bedridden. If they would have a fever, the fever would have to be quite high before they dared to be in bed. The only time they dared to stay home was when they had malaria. If they should be sickly like me, day in and day out, they did not dare stay home. They were not allowed to stay behind; they had to go to work. Excuse me, but I am telling you the truth. If I was a little bit sick, I

was able to go; it was just a mild sickness, so I just went to do the labor. I went to work while being sick. When they were able to walk while being sick, they must go do the labor, unless they were shivering all over. Sometimes they were shivering, and they lay down and shivered; when the fever was abated, they got up and went to do the labor. The Khmer Rouge would give them some medicines to take.

Q. If the people would not go to do the labor, what would the Khmer Rouges do?

A. If we did not go to do the labor, they would re-educate us. I don't know what they did. I was afraid of them. I didn't know what they did to the people. I didn't dare let them re-educate me because I was scared of them. When I heard that they re-educated people, I was scared to death, my breath was about to expire. Everyday, whenever I heard people say, "Listen, its almost time for the meeting." "Oh my lord," I thought, "is it going to be me, or someone else?" I was scared that they might take me or someone else away. This is what I'm scared of, you see? I was thinking about that. I am telling you the truth. I was so scared of them, too scared, extremely scared. If we were truly sick, they would give us rice and medicine. If we were sick but could still walk, then we would not get the rice ration. We will have to do the labor to get the ration. If we were sick, we had to be truly sick, and we would be all right. We could stay home and get the permission to do so. Then they would let us go to rest at the hospital. Or else, if we were sick, but not serious enough to be hospitalized, then we could stay home, and they would treat us.

Q. How did they punish or sentence the people?

A. Those of us who were doing the labor like everyone else were not punished. As for other people in other units who lived far away from me, I can not tell you what happened to them because I could not witness what happened there. I don't dare say anything about them.

Q. Did those people who committed an offense come back? Did they say anything about what happened to them?

A. They came back. Sometimes they came back after two weeks or one month. We did not dare talk to one another at night. At night, when we went to sleep, we did not dare talk to each other at all. If the huts were off the grounds — just don't talk at all. The hammocks were all over the place underneath the huts. As for my hut, it was a tiny hut and when I got up to go do the labor, there were hammocks tied a cross, and I could not get out of there. They tied the hammocks around the hut. I don't know why they had the hammocks all over. If we were talking to one another, especially at night, we would be taken away and we disappeared if we said something wrong, right in the middle of the night.

Q. For those people who were taken away, what offenses did they commit?

A. I don't know about other people's stories. Those who disappeared would just disappear. Those who stayed behind didn't dare say anything, and didn't know what was going on. We didn't know what was going on. We didn't dare whisper to each other either. If they saw us sit around and whisper to one another, we would be in trouble for whispering, for no reason at all, so we did not dare say anything. We did not know what was going on. So, I don't know anything about it. I don't know about the offenses they have committed, or what we did wrong. All we knew was that, all of a sudden, people disappeared. Sometimes they would go do the labor and disappear; sometimes they would return. Sometimes they went to educate themselves. We didn't know where they went to educate themselves. They would go to study and disappeared. We didn't know where they went to study. They went to study, their children waiting for them, and they did not return. They didn't know where they went to study. They went to study and they disappeared. Talking about *Nouw*, my niece, she was my cousin's daughter, the Khmer Rouge said, "*Nouw*, we are taking your husband to educate him." She said, "If you take my husband to educate him, I am also going to educate myself too; I am not staying behind." She had a Vietnamese husband. She was my distant niece, but she lived in the same village as mine, so we were like close relatives. I told her, "*Nouw*, don't go." She was pretty, had a small frame, and had two children. She cried and she followed her husband, taking her children along. She was gone forever. Her mother met me and said, "Cousin, I am grieving for *Nouw*." So I said, "Grieving for her, cousin? I don't even know what happened." She was gone and never returned. I didn't know where she went to educate herself. Her husband, her children, and she were gone and vanished.

Q. Grandma, have you ever seen women or heard about them being raped? Were there any violations of the moral code?

A. Yes, I have heard of it, but . . . well, I only heard some rumors about it from other far away places. I have never witnessed it. I only heard other people talk about it. It was about someone who was ordered to carry dirt in buckets suspended from a pole across the shoulders. They said that. I don't know what offenses the person committed, but the people said, "Dragging the end of the *remorque* (French word for peddi cab). . ." I don't know what they meant by the end of the *remorque*. Could it mean moral code's violation, this dragging the end of the *remorque* thing? Then he/she was ordered to carry dirt. I didn't know the person. I did not even dare to ask the people about the culprit.

Q. Have you heard about women being raped? Were men and women allowed to fall in love?

- A. I have never heard about women being raped. People didn't dare do it. They were forbidden to do it. If they were to have a relationship, they had to ask the Khmer Rouge for permission first. When they asked for permission to have a relationship, they would grant it and they would help them out. They would marry them off.
- Q. When we talk about rape, I don't know about it. People didn't dare do it; didn't seem like I heard about it though. There was one case in a long period of time. There weren't very many of them.
- Q. Between men and women, which one did they mistreat the most?
- A. I don't know which one of these they mistreated the most. I would say that they were equally treated, meaning, whoever committed an offense, the person would be punished regardless of the gender. They said, "Whomever the head belongs to it is also his/her hair." This was what I heard them say. I didn't really know about the men and women's status, please excuse me, but I just heard them say, "Whomever the head belongs to, it is also his/her hair."
- Q. If they arrested the husband, would they have also arrested his wife? What kind of offenses did the victim commit?
- A. It all depended. Sometimes the husband vanished, but his wife remained. Those victims didn't seem to commit any offense. They went to do labor just like all of us. They did the labor from dawn to dusk, just like us. They did more labor than we did. All we knew was that the person was called to go and be re-educated. I didn't really know much about it because I was quite sickly and I did not go to do labor with the units. I stayed in the elderly units. I had no way of knowing about anything. I did not go with the youth units. I stayed in the elderly units, so how could I learn about any of the events? I did not go with the youth units. I was in the elderly units. The elderly did not talk to one another very much. At that time, people did not talk to one another. The only time that people would talk to one another was to say, "Come on, it's time, let's go. Come on it's time to go back." That was all. If someone had betel leaves, we would ask him/her for some and that was all. If not, we would lead one another to steal some betel leaves, sweet potatoes, that was all. I didn't dare go and steal sweet potatoes. I would only go around and pick some vegetables that grew wild or bamboo shoots.
- Q. Have they ever arrested people?
- A. If they saw the people steal, they could arrest them to be re-educated, that is, if they stole things once or twice. If not, if they did not re-educate them, they would take them away to be killed, you see. But they have never caught us. It did not take us very long to steal things, how could they catch us? For example, we were walking along, and when we saw some sweet potatoes, we just pulled up a bulb; it was fast. We just took one potato to eat, that was all. They did not see us. We

did not dare do it so that they would see us.

Q. Why did those people mistreat the Cambodians who are their own people?

A. I am sorry but I don't know about this at all. I don't know their reasons behind it. I was always wondering about it. I don't really know about it. I was wondering, "Why do they do this? There was uncooked rice and cooked rice, why did they let the people starve and walk around and sleep and walk . . ." My nephew who is still alive says, "Mom there are houses around, how come you don't let me sleep in them? Why did you have me sleep around a hillock? It is such a hardship. I am not able to walk well." This is my nephew who is still alive now. He said, "Mom, you made me walk all morning long and I was so sleepy, besides my feet also got tired. You made me sleep at a hillock, and not in a house." Then I was wondering about it. Even a child was complaining about it. As for us, we were elderly, and I was wondering why they did what they did. I don't know what to say because I am ignorant. I am sorry, I am ignorant and I don't know their reasons behind all this.

Q. If we, the women, had a problem, who was the person who was able to assist them?

A. We could go to the village chief. For example, if we needed clothes, we could go and ask for them from the group's leaders. For other kinds of problems which happened, I really didn't know whom I could discuss them with at all. I did not have any problem like other people. I don't know about this, please excuse me, because I didn't dare talk at all. I didn't have much problems because I didn't talk. I didn't talk and it was like the Lord Buddha helped me. I never talked about anything. Besides, I didn't dare ask people any questions. When someone committed an offense and I saw that he/she disappeared, I didn't dare ask any questions. When a person didn't commit any offense, I didn't ask any questions either. When they gave us something to eat, I would just eat it; when they told me to go somewhere for them, I just went. I just obeyed them. At that time, they told us to grow kapok tree (homonym for the word dumb). So I didn't dare talk. I heard them say, "Grow the kapok trees." They probably didn't allow us to talk, I guess. I didn't dare talk. This was the reason I was able to survive up to now. I survived because I prayed to Buddha and my angels on my journey to the border. I got out because I followed some people. These people would say, "We are leaving today or we are coming back in tomorrow. I had nothing when I left. I only had a little bit of rice. I asked people for food all the way through. I was able to live because of other people's charity all the way through my journey. I was not able to bring anything with me. This is why I am grateful and I think of their generosity everyday. I tried very hard to accumulate some merits by holding religious ceremonies. I remembered our people being generous to me and feeding me so I could live. I wanted to adhere to the Buddha's principles and I was able to

do it too. I had such a hardship. I didn't really have any difficulty with anyone else, but only with myself. I suffered mentally and not physically. Since I saw that I suffered mentally, I adhered to Buddha's principles. I tried to do good deeds. When bad deeds were done to me, I didn't know what to do.

Q. Right now, are you suffering?

A. You can say that I am suffering, but it is like I am not suffering. The reason I said I do not suffer because I still have a hard time, but it is not like I don't have a hard time because I don't think. I don't think about the difficulty because the government feeds me every day. Whenever we were sick, the doctor would treat us immediately and give us care. It was as though my father and mother were still alive nowadays. At the present time, it is like my mother, my father, my brothers, my husband, or my son were still alive. In my heart I am missing my son, my husband, my mother, and my father. Well, this on one hand, on the other hand, while I am living here, it is as though they were still alive. I am telling you the truth. Why do I say this? When I was sick — if I were seriously ill, the ambulance would come and take me to the hospital right at my home. As soon as I got to the hospital the doctor would give me some injections and take care of me and I would get cured right away. This is the reason why I am very happy now. I am very happy because it is as though my father, and my mother were with me. I considered these people like my parents. I am telling you the truth, you know, I am not lying to you or being dishonest, no I am not. I really love the people truly. I am not dishonest. I love the doctor.

Q. You love the doctor and consider him as your parent; why is this so?

A. I trust him and I love all the people, not just one person. I also love that one too. (Mollica) When he came like this, I love him. I am telling you the truth. I am not lying because I adhere to the Buddha's principles, I don't dare lie. Wherever I am going to, people love me. Doctor Mollica took care of me and provided me with tender loving care and gave me some medicine to take. Previously, my knees hurt, but now I am able to walk a little bit. At first I was lethargic, and after taking so many pills, I am better now.

Q. You said that you suffered very much, but that you don't worry very much. What did you do so you don't worry too much?

A. I don't worry too much because I adhere to Buddha's principles. I think about the problems in my mind, but I don't think about them later on because if I do it. I concentrate on my breathing in and out (my strength); I based my reasoning on my breath. I am breathing like this, and when my strength subsides, I can't worry. When I don't worry, I don't suffer. I depend on the other Cambodians or my benefactors. I depend on When I am suddenly ill, well, when I am still strong, I still worry. I am telling you the truth. I am very sincere, I am not

insincere, I am very sincere. When I was seriously ill, I did not worry any more. Right now I like to have things. I still want to have things, but I cannot be a person of means by myself. I only want to have enough just to survive and to contribute to charity to gather merits for the after life. I am telling the truth. I don't know what I want to have wealth for? I only want to have enough to live on, to give to charity, and to sustain life. I would be happy if I would have enough to live on. I don't want to have too much. Where would I take the wealth to? I am telling you the truth. So as long as you get just a little bit, I don't want anything else. As soon as my heart stops wanting something, I would stop doing something too. When my heart still wants something, my mind still worries about things. I am telling you the truth. If you don't believe me, try to think in these terms and see what happens, and you will really believe me.

Q. Did you have bad dreams?

A. Ever since I adhere to Buddha's principles, when I was ill, I saw my husband in my dreams. Now I am well. Sometimes I dream of my mother. In *Pol Pot's* time, I never had bad dreams. I would see that there was a body of water and that I was able to cross it. (Cambodians believe that if one crosses a body of water in a dream, one can overcome an obstacle.)

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 5

- Q. How do the Cambodian people hold a funeral ceremony according to the Cambodian customs?
- A. Please excuse me, I have forgotten about some of the customs. In the Sangkum time, when someone passed away, the family would invite the monks from the pagoda to recite the *Dharmas* for the *Bangsokoul* for the deceased (convey merits to dead family members). Before a person dies, when he/she is seriously ill, some families invited the monks to recite the Buddhist scriptures. Other families do not invite the monks for the scripture recitation. Sometimes they did not have the chance to invite the monks and the person dies. Some people were sick of old age and the family invited the monks to recite the scriptures called *Kovda* to wait for the person's end. At the time, the person has not died yet. The monks stayed near the dying person and recited the scriptures. They recited the *Pathoam* (scriptures recited before or when a person dies). Some monks recited three or four rounds while other monks recited one round, and the person died. That night, the monks recited the *Kovda*. The relatives came over and there were elderly people coming from other towns to help. In my home town people would bring uncooked rice, money, candles, incense, and vegetables to help pitch in. Some people put them in baskets, while others did in dishes; each will help with this. When tomorrow came . . . people usually did this: have the body lie in state for two or three days, it all depended on the families wishes. Some families would cremate the body after lying in state for one day, or they would bury it in the grave yard, and afterwards they would hold the funeral ceremony. Some people cremated the body. The deceased's parents or husband would keep the body one, two or three nights and cremate the body. There were some monks and many lay people who joined the funeral. People made a coffin, and using banana trunks they made an apparatus to support the coffin. Then they cremated the body. They also had fireworks, and the kinds of ground fireworks which would sizzle with some sounds, you know. But not every family held this kind of funeral. Some people would just bury the body after the person died; they did not have a funeral for him/her. Afterwards, they would hold the *Da* ceremony inviting the monks for food and Buddhist scripture recitation to convey the merits of the deceased. After a person was deceased for a hundred days, the families held another religious ceremony. They always held religious ceremonies one after the other.
- Q. What were the times when the monks recite the *Kovda*? What were the occasions?
- A. The *Kovda* was recited when the family members knew that the person will not survive. Therefore, the *Kovda* was recited so that the person had Buddha's

Dharmas on his/her mind before death, hoping that maybe the merits can help this person in the after life, so that he/she would not suffer anymore. The people only wished that the deceased would not suffer anymore in the afterlife, but they didn't really know whether or not they would be free of suffering. You have to excuse me about this, but the Cambodians always adhere to this custom. This was to help the sick person focus his/her mind on Buddha or his Dharmas or to remember some of the merits or charities which he/she has gathered and given in the past.

- Q. When were the times that *Preah Thoam* was recited? For what occasion?
- A. *Preah Thoam* was recited when the sick person was dying. It was for a critically ill person. It was recited so that the person thought about the Dharmas before his/her death. It was like the people conveyed the merits to him/her. They did not know how to do this, so they have the monks or other people recite the Dharmas for him/her.
- Q. What does the *Preah Thoam* depict?
- A. I don't understand it. I only noticed that when a person was near death, the people would recite the *Preah Thoam* for him/her. When I was young, whenever I heard the *Preah Thoam* I was scared. I forgot about it, I don't remember what it says.
- Q. Your mother passed away when you were young. How much did you suffer as a result? What did you do to prevent the sufferings from overcoming you or in order to abate them?
- A. When I was young, I could not overcome my sufferings. I always thought about them. There was no time for me to forget about them. I missed my mother to the point that I forgot to eat rice and other foods. I always cried. I was demented because I missed my mother so much. When she passed away I was very small. I used to see her. When she was gone, I saw other children's mothers and I was demented. I felt as if I didn't sense anything clearly, like other people did. When I was young, I was not too alert because I missed my mother too much. My mother passed away when I was thirteen years old.
- Q. What did you do in order to abate the sufferings? What did you do to pick up the pieces?
- A. I thought about my mother for a long time. I still miss my mother when I am this old, but I miss her less with my age. You know, I just miss her less and less. When I was young, I was not able to control myself or my feelings. Right now, I cannot control my feeling completely, but I can control them somewhat. Nowadays, I am able to control my feelings to a certain degree. I have to be this

old to be able to control my feelings. When I stayed in Cambodia, I was not able to tell myself not to miss my mother. Even when I went to stay at the refugee camp, still I was not able to tell myself not to miss my mother. I thought about other people who had; for example, other people live with their children all together. When I thought of that, I just cried. I cried in spite of myself. The mere sight of a mother and her children being together made me cry, and this made me demented and kind of forgetful. I just cried and cried. This made me demented, and I have a hard time remembering anything. I am not able to do anything much.

When people gave me something to eat, I just went to get the food and ate it. When I brought it, I ate it. I always thought about her and I am not able to forget about her. I always thought about her by myself. It is difficult for me because I am all alone. Whenever I thought about her so much, I became demented. I always thought about her. Right now, I am trying to pick up the pieces, and get a hold of myself. I thought to myself, "When I still think about her and miss her like this, I will become weaker and weaker." I think to myself, "When I have no strength, no energy, and when I miss my husband, how about me? I am living by myself. Furthermore, if I missed my mother, she left me and was gone; and if I missed my children, there is not even a single one who is with me now." For this reason, I am just like a *chook* (small aquatic plants) in the middle of the river or the sea. My life is empty. Every move I make, sitting, sleeping, walking, and standing, I feel as if I am all alone. Even though I have some relatives, I am still lonely; this is how I feel. I am telling you the truth, you know. Right now, I still feel the same way. I still feel like I am a *chook* in the middle of a river. This feeling is still with me. But I try to forget about this feeling because I think, "I miss my husband so much, but for myself, I don't even know when my final day will come, therefore I Some days I miss him, other days, when I did not, I just bore it.

Q. Spiritually what did you do to abate this suffering?

A. I try to adhere to Buddha's precepts; I try to have a good heart. I try to get a hold of myself. I think to myself, "Even if I want to make my body young again, I am not able to do it. Even if I want my hair to be as beautiful as it was when I was young, I can not do it. The same thing goes with my skin; it cannot be as beautiful as when I was young. Therefore my heart is getting tired of the appearance of my body. But, to say that I hate it, or something like that, I say that I do not hate it. I live because of my body, and I feel very sorry for my body. Due to my body, my mind told me to adhere to Buddha's principles. So now, I am learning. I know that, oh, before I missed my mother, my father, and my husband to the extent that I am demented. But, now, I am only thinking of Buddha, the Dharmas, and the *Sangha* (monks). I am still missing my parents. I am thinking of my parents merits, and Lord Buddha's grace. When I am old, the only things that can help me are those merits. I rely on these merits to help me in the future after life. At the

present time, I rely on my benefactors, for example, the humanitarian workers who are taking care of me right now. These people are my benefactors and I am taking refuge in this country. At the present time, these are the merits for me. These are also those brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, who take pity on me, such as the Doctor Mollica. I am relying on him right now. I am adhering to Buddha's precepts. The brothers and sisters, aunts and uncle are my benefactors; for example, Doctor Mollica who interviews me. I think this person is my benefactor.

Q. What else did you do to abate this suffering?

A. I did meditation. If I should receive any merit from this, the merit would make my heart pure. When my heart is pure, it was only pure the moment I did meditation. I am not able to concentrate too long on my meditation yet because when I stopped praying to Buddha or concentrating my mind was wandering here and there. I was able to concentrate only at the time when I was sitting still and it did not last long. This also depended on the day I did my meditation. I was not able to sit and concentrate usually. When I sat, it was useless, because my mind was still wandering around to every nook and cranny like that. Some days, my mind was pure and at night, when I sat and meditated, I would last as long as it took half of joss stick to burn, that was half an hour or one hour, and that was enough for me. The meditation made my mind pure, and that was all. The only thing that I can detect is that the meditation made my mind pure. I cannot see any other merits than that. I am telling you the truth. I am only an amateur, I studied meditation very little.

Q. In your village, how did the people conduct a funeral ceremony?

A. They conducted . . . some people took the body and buried it in the burial site. Other people had a funeral and cremated the body just like we did. The people conducted the funeral ceremony the same way. For the bodies which were buried in the burial site, they were dug up in June and July, and were blessed and given a religious ceremony; they were cremated at the edge of the grave, and they gathered up the ashes to be kept at the pagoda, after that they would hold a funeral for three days and three nights.

Q. Why would the people dig up the body and hold the funeral in June and July?

A. I am sorry, but I really don't know why. I am not good at talking about this thing. Some people cried out loud, while others just shed tears streaming down their cheeks; but as for me, I cried out loud. I stood near the door way and cried out loud. I was crying out loud, my mother was gone. An old man asked me, "Why are you crying?" I was crying even louder. Well, that was me. I was crying. I

- Q. thought my mother will never come back and that was all. I did not understand anything because I was young.
- Q. In the Pol Pot regime, did you hold any religious ceremony for her?
- A. The people usually did not have a chance to adhere to our customs closely when it came to a funeral every time someone passed away. When she was sick, the family was able to take care of her for only one or two days. I was doing this because she was an old person. If the patient was young, he/she would be taken to the hospital. The family would not have a chance to take care of him/her. The person would be taken to the hospital and I didn't quite know what happened. Whatever they did with the patients I had no idea, I am sorry. The victims died at the hospital, not at home. The illnesses were of a different kind. They were not the same. When someone died, they were buried while other bodies were cremated. We had no chance nor opportunity to hold funeral ceremonies for them. We did not have any monks, no nuns.
- Q. What did the people do before the bodies were buried?
- A. If the deceased were elders, the family could ask the Khmer Rouge for the coffins which were given to them sometimes. The bodies were put in the coffins and the families would bathe the bodies before putting them in the coffins, a gesture considered to wash off the families' sins committed to the deceased involuntarily while they were still alive. They had the time to bathe the bodies, put them in the coffins, and were disposed of nicely, you know. I am talking about the elders who died. As for the young people's bodies, you have to excuse me, because I didn't really know. Besides, I did not see many young people's bodies since I was busy working; there were not too many young people living near me. At that time, there were not too many elders who died. There were not too many older people who died. At the time there were some old people who died. Once in a while, one old person died somewhere over there and I never saw them die. At that time, we did not have a funeral ceremony. Some people would cremate the bodies, but there were not too many bodies which were cremated. After the cremation, I didn't know where they took the ashes to. There were no monks who would hold the funeral ceremony, no. In my case, they took the body to bury.
- Q. Did you go to see the Khmer Rouge bury your husband's body?
- A. No, I did not go. They did not allow me to go. I left it up to them. Whatever they did with him, it was all right with me. I didn't know where they buried my husband's body. I was demented. I only remembered about my daughter. They buried my daughter's body at the *Ang Roka* pagoda. Other than this, I don't remember where they were buried. I don't know.

- Q. In the Khmer Rouge time, were you allowed to cry like at the *Sangkum* time?
- A. When my daughter died, I was not thinking about being afraid of them and that they did not allow us to cry. I was crying, but I could not cry. I was crying out loud, but tears would not come out. My eyes were so dry. I was not able to cry out. It was like . . . maybe I thought about being a mother, I guess. It was like my body was dry. I had no tears. My eyes were dry. I had no tears whatsoever. When my husband died, I could not cry either. It was too much for me; it was too much that I cried but no tears came out. How could I have any tears? I didn't have any tears to begin with. It was like my body was in a trance. It was like my mind was a blank, and I had no tears; I was dry. I didn't even have saliva. I was dry. If I cried, I could not cry. All I could do was to open my mouth. No air was coming out. I opened my mouth, and no sound came out, because it was just too dry. I was having some deep thoughts. When my mother passed away, I was able to cry, "wah, wah;" I was able to cry out, you know. When my father passed away, I did not stay near him because I was living in *Kandaal* Stung, yes, when my father passed away.
- Q. Did they allow you to hold a funeral ceremony?
- A. I did not hold any funeral ceremony, no I did not. If there were some monks, I guess they would allow me to do it; but there were no monks.
- Q. At that time, when your daughter and your husband passed away, what did you do to abate your mourning?
- A. There was nothing that could help me. The only thing for me to do was to hide and cry. Whenever they saw me, they would ask me a few words or they told me to do a labor over here or over there, and I just went to do it with the rest of the people. Behind their backs at night, when I lay down to sleep, I cried. When all was quiet, I would go away by myself and cry.
- Q. Did they ever ask you why you cried, grandma? When they saw you cry, what would they do to you?
- A. I did not let them see me cry, how could they have asked me about it? They said if the deceased were the elderly who died of natural causes, we were allowed to cry. We were also allowed to cry when the deceased were little children. But, if we felt sorry for, like, someone, well like, if the person committed an offense, and he/she died, then we were not allowed to cry. This held true for our older siblings, our children, or our younger siblings too. We were not allowed to cry. When we cried, the Khmer Rouge said that we wanted to follow the deceased. They wanted to take us along with the deceased too and we would be the offender.

- Q. What were the offenses the offenders committed?
- A. The offenders were not aware of the offenses. All they knew was that they committed an offense, they were taken away, and they were killed. This was what the elderly told me. As for me, I was lucky. I have never seen anyone who was killed because of an offense. I only saw people who died of an illness. I have never seen people die because of an offense. I only heard people say that for these people we were not allowed to cry; we should not cry. When the Khmer Rouge took them away, and they should die, then the family should not cry. I am telling you the truth. I have not seen them die or be killed.
- Q. For some other cases, were the families allowed to cry or hold a funeral ceremony?
- A. I saw *Nhim*'s wife cry when her husband died and it was all right. He was sick. When a person was sick and died, the family was allowed to cry. They cremated the body. I don't know where they kept the ashes. I don't know about other people, because we lived in the country side, and our huts were far from one another. We only met at lunch time. Besides, all the people went to do the labor with the units. *Nhim* was a cripple man; one of his legs was crippled. He was sick and he died. He died right at home. Those who were not sick and died, did not die at home. I don't know where they had gone to. I didn't know where the people had gone to do labor with the units; I have never seen them. These people have never come home to sleep. I didn't know anything about them. I did not see them, you will have to excuse me.
- Q. At that time, in order to abate your sufferings, what did you do?
- A. I was not able to do anything. I could not do anything.
- Q. Did you go out and do the labor like everybody else? Did you have any energy to do the labor for them?
- A. I went to do the labor like the other people, but I went with tears in my eyes. As for my energy, I was working reluctantly. I had no strength. I did the labor reluctantly. I was carrying the dirt and digging up the ground. If I didn't do these labors, I would help other people carry the dirt. The people were always mad at me. They wanted me to throw the dirt from the basket, but I could not throw the dirt; my hands were blistered. I could not lift my hands and throw the dirt. The only thing I did was to let my hands go and my partner was mad at me.
- Q. Right now, how do the people conduct a funeral ceremony?

- A. At the present time, from what I've observed, some people stayed at the hospital and could rest there. They also received tender loving care there. If they should die, they died an easy death. It is not like in our country. When someone died, the family could ask for permission to have the ashes kept at the pagoda. I have seen two such cases. The families held a funeral ceremony that lasted for one week. The people here were amazed at these families. They are sure lucky to be in this country. They are able to keep the body at the pagoda and hold a funeral ceremony for seven days. They are very lucky. They played a cassette with the *Pathoam* recitation (special Dharma for the deceased) everyday. At night they invited the monks for the *Bangsokol* (to convey the merits to the departed) and the recitation of Buddha's Dharmas to convey the merits for the deceased. At night they played the *Pathoam* cassette to keep vigil on the deceased. In the mornings, they prepared breakfasts for the monks. In the afternoons, the monks recited the Buddhist scriptures to convey the merits for the deceased; this went on everyday until it was seven days, then they took the body by car to the cremation place. Two bodies were cremated; old lady *Chhay's* husband's body was buried. I had a chance to go to a funeral for two people. In Cambodia, we were not given a chance to go to the cremation place or burial site. We were not allowed to go along.
- Q. In the *Sangkum* time, did the people hold the funeral more at home or at the pagoda?
- A. In the *Sangkum* time, when a person died, the family would hold a funeral ceremony by inviting the monks to their homes. They cremated the body in the middle of the rice fields or hillock. They cremated the body there. In Cambodia the people would eat the *Krasang* tree (a kind of tree bearing sour fruits used in sour soups) and use it as wood to cremate the body. If not, they would take it and keep it in the forest, a burial site. When the month of August came, the family dug it up and cremated it near the pagoda, while other families cremated it at the edge of the grave. Those families who had some money cremated the deceased's body near the pagoda. Those families who cremated the deceased's body at the edge of the grave had only a little bit of money.
- Q. What happened when they prepared for a funeral procession?
- A. When they dug up the remains for the funeral ceremony, they would wash them and take them home. Then they took them in a procession, with the *Chhayam*, to the pagoda. (*Chhayam* is a traditional musical ensemble made up of two sided drums, and a gong.) After keeping at the pagoda for three days, they took the remains in a procession to the cremation site. They cremated the remains which they dug up. They lay the remains in the coffins around the temple. Then they took them in a procession to the cremation site. Sometimes, there were two or

Q. three bodies. The families of the deceased would dig up the remains and hold the funeral ceremonies together. There were many remains, and they would walk in a procession around the temple. They also had a traditional music playing along, plus the *Chhayam*, which made the atmosphere quite festive. This is what happened in Cambodia, before the year 1975. After the procession and the cremation, we had what we called "up on the *Sala*," or the hall. This means that the remains, the ashes were kept in the hall of the pagoda. The families invited the monks for the Dharmas recitation. This is called the *Aphisaek* of Buddha, to sprinkle perfumed water on Buddha statue and hold a religious ceremony. They brought the ashes to be blessed for the final merit, to add more merit. For the common people's funeral ceremony, they did this ceremony for the remains for three days. This means that they cremated them the night before. In the morning they prepared some foods for the monks, in the evening they invited the monks for the Dharmas recitation. The next morning they had this ceremony called *Chhlorng*. This took three days.

Q. What did the children in the family wear for the mourning?

A. The children wore mourning clothes according to their functions in the groups, in the family. The son who was ordained to "lead the fire" would wear white clothes; the one who turned the gem ring also wore white clothes; the one who threw the popped rice also wore white clothes. The eldest son was the one who was ordained to lead the fire. If there wasn't any eldest son, the younger son would take his place, as long as it was a boy.

Q. What did the people do in this "turning of the gem ring"? What was its purpose?

A. Leading the coffin, was a monk who recited the *Aphikthoam*. In the procession, there was a Buddha statue. The one who was ordained to lead the fire told the *Acha* (a layman who helps the monks perform religious or traditional ceremonies) to put a gem ring in a pot. The *Acha* lighted a candle in the pot, I don't really know what they did in the ceremony, at the time I was kind of young. I just heard the people say to turn the gem ring. As for the popped rice, they really threw the real popped rice at the funeral procession. There was a son who was ordained to lead the fire, a girl to turn the gem ring, and another girl to throw the popped rice. I don't really know the meaning of the turning of the gem ring. But for the throwing of the popped rice, I heard some people say it is like a symbol of leaving our bones on this earth, our white bones and useless bones were discarded on the earth. It was like the bones, burned to ashes, were just like the white popped rice which was strewn all over. This was what the elderly and the *Achas* were talking about. As for the ordaining to lead the fire, it was to repay the merits, the kindness of the fathers or mothers. The ones who were ordained to lead the fire were ordained for only one night. They left the monkhood the next morning.

- Q. Where did they keep the ashes?
- A. They kept them underneath the pedestals of the Buddha statues. Some people kept them at the "Lowell" while others kept them at the "Provident."
- Q. Why did they not keep them at home?
- A. This depended on the deceased's children, parents, and brothers and sisters. Those who were loved by their families who were not naive, had their ashes kept right at home and were being cared for. But those others who were naive and were afraid of their own parents' ashes, have them kept at the pagoda. In Cambodia, people kept the ashes at the pagoda. They had Buddha statues at home; besides, they also had a proper place to display them. They had a little hall built in front of their house, and they built a little hut in front of their house too. But, here, how can we keep them at home when all the houses are rented? This is the reason why the people kept them at the pagoda.
- Q. Grandma, what did you do for your late husband, children, parents, and brothers and sisters?
- A. When I came here, and this pagoda was built, I had held some religious ceremonies for them like other people. I was only able to hold just a few of these ceremonies. I only held a few of them gradually. I always conveyed merits to them everyday. When I was at the *Khao I Dang* camp, I held some religious ceremonies for them and invited the monks to recite the Buddhist scriptures to convey the merits to them. When I came here, I did not have a chance to hold one yet. I was only able to hold some regular religious ceremonies, such as the *Phcum Benh* ceremonies, when I conveyed the merits to them too.
- Q. Why have you not held religious ceremonies for them?
- A. Because I spent all my money and I did not have any left. Right now, I am saving my money to hold a religious ceremony for my parents and husband. I have not reimbursed the airplane ticket yet. Every month, I save \$20 to \$30. I spent parts of it on charity, foods, and rent. I saved a little bit of money each time, and when I will have enough, I think I might hold a religious ceremony, but I don't really know when. I have done it with my younger cousin three times now. I did it once on my own and I only spent about five hundred or six hundred dollars. As for my cousin, she has already held two religious ceremonies for her husband. Nowadays, I always hold religious ceremonies, and give to charity. It was not much, but I owed it to my benefactors assistance and donations. It was like a charity on their part to me. I spent some of it on rent, charity, a few religious ceremonies right now, and contributed some money to my friends who held some

religious ceremonies at this pagoda here. Every month, I try to do this. The next month gets here, and I would repeat the same cycle of dividing money for those expenses. I spent some money on foods, charity, and when my friends informed me about their religious ceremonies, I would contribute some money to them; and this went on with my friends everywhere. Sometimes, I would have some money left, while other times the money was all used up.

I had a shop here before the Khmer Rouge came. I want to live in a kind of a shop village at the pagoda place which was not a big house because I wanted my children to go to school and to live near the pagoda. When we were evacuated from the village, I was taken to another village to another one. I lost my father during the evacuation. He died during the evacuation. I did not have any other belongings. I think now I was a really poor person, I was not wealthy, I did not have much. My first daughter died because she was sick. My second daughter died because she was sick. She did not do any hard labor which was to be done. She worked in the garden. The other daughter died because of malaria. The two other daughters also worked the fields (communist agriculture) and did not die. At that time, I only lost my father. He was in charge of the village. He had a certain status and dignity and his wife was a teacher. He could not eat the porridge or the rice, but he was able to eat small amounts of it. His wife died. The village were able to find some fish in the ponds. They had a good relationship with the government to him as usual. He did not have any other work. It was not plentiful at all, it was just not enough. They asked him to go to the work camps. He did not go. Afterwards I was made to go to the work camps. They had no wheat, rice, and grew vegetables for us. Whenever did the labor, they gave us some breaks.

Q: How did the Khmer Rouge regime, how much did you suffer?

A: The only thing was that my brothers were separated from me and disappeared. My father died in the camp. Right now, I don't know where my nephews and nieces are. I don't know where my brothers are. I miss one of my brothers. He is separated from me. When he was evacuated, he was still a monk. I don't know where he is. He was trying to evade the Khmer Rouge. As for me, I was always working with the rest of the people. I was always walking along with the people, going from one village to another. It was like, if this year we were not able to work, if we were not able to work, we must go on to another area to farm. When the Khmer Rouge came, or at night fall, I thought to myself, "I don't want to be in the work camps. How can I escape and go to another country? I can't here and I can't say anything. I can't express any feeling." So I just continue working like the others. There were times when I was frightened, and feared for the Khmer Rouge, I mean that I was not frightened. I was frightened. I thought, "I don't know what to do." When I heard the Khmer Rouge announce to us that it was the end of the year, that day was a fear day. When the meeting was over, then my

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- Q. How hard and miserable was your life under the *Pol Pot* regime? How about your mental health?
- A. I had sold my house before the *Pol Pot* time. I went to live in a kind of a shop house at the market place which was not a big house because I wanted my children to go to school and it was near the pagoda. When we were evacuated from the village, I was just traveling from one village to another one. I lost my cows during the confusion. So I only lost my cows. I did not have any other belongings. At that time, I was a middle class person; I was not wealthy, I did not have much. My husband was sick, you see, and my daughter died because she too was sick. My daughter died of illness, you see. She did not do any hard labor which caused her death. She joined the children's unit. The other daughter died before this one. The one who died while she served the *Angka* (communist organization) died before this. At that time, I only lost my father. He was in charge of rolling the rope. He had a chronic stomachache and dysentery and his legs were swollen. He could not eat the porridge or the rice, but he was able to eat a small amount of it. He was old. The people were able to find some fish in the ponds. They made soup with the fish and gave some to him as usual. He did not have enough to eat. It was not plentiful at all; it was just not enough. They ordered me to go dig some canals. I had a hard time. Afterwards I was made to go work in the village. They had me weave the mats, and grow vegetables for them. When we did the labor, they gave us some breaks.
- Q. Under the Khmer Rouge regime, how much did you suffer?
- A. The only thing was that all my brothers were separated from me and disappeared. We did not find one another. Right now, I don't know where my nephews and nieces are. I don't know where my brothers are. I miss one of my brothers. He is next to me in line. When he was evacuated, he was still a monk. I don't know where he fled to. He was trying to evade the Khmer Rouge. As for me, I was always drifting along with the rest of the people. I was always walking along with other people, going from one village to another. It was like, if this year we were able to farm successfully in one area, we must go on to another area to farm. When lunch or dinner time came, or at night fall, I thought to myself, "I don't want to stay in that country anymore. How can I escape and go to another country? I can't leave and I can't say anything. I can't express any feeling." So I just continue to do the labor for them. There were times when I was frightened, and feared for my life; it did not mean that I was not frightened. I was frightened. I thought, "Will I be alive at all?" When I heard the Khmer Rouge announce to us that it was meeting time, that day was a fear day. When the meeting was over, then my

life was spared for that day and I stopped being afraid. When I heard that they held a meeting to assign any labor to us, I began to be frightened again. For me, that was all that affected me the most. One day I had a fever. They said that I did not have a fever at all, that I only had an imaginary fever, that it was all in my mind. They took me away to re-educate me once.

Q. What did they do when they re-educate you?

A. They took me away and interrogated me. They said, "Is your sickness all in your mind or do you just want to have a husband?" I said, "No, I am sick. My hand hurts; it was injured by a mortar." They interrogated me for a long time, and I was giving them the same answer, that was all. So, they released me. They did not hit me. I was interrogated only once. After that I was sick again, one more time. I had a fever and they . . . It was one of the people who worked in the unit. He lived next to my hut. The people were digging some canals. I over heard the Khmer Rouge discuss something. They said, "Hey, the one who's short and fair, you know, why don't we kill her? Let's kill her. Let's not spare her!" They were talking about me, you know. So I thought, "Oh gee, they will take me away and kill me." The same Khmer Rouge said, "We can arrest her." When I heard them say, "Arrest her," I went down from my hut, and they told me not to run. I said, "I am not running. How can I run and why should I run? I am hot. That is why I am coming down to get some air." My son came down behind me. My husband also came down behind me too. I said, "I am not running. How can I escape? I am hot, that is all. I am coming down to cool myself off a little bit." They said, "Don't run away." I said, "No, I am not running away. I have not committed any offense to make me run away. I did not commit any offense." When I got to the ground level, I knelt down and joined hands in prayer to all the powerful beings residing in the eight cardinal points right in front of those people. I was praying to all of the *Tevadas* (male angels), the Lords of the land, the goddess of the earth, *Kung Hing*. After I prayed to all these powerful beings, I said, "My son go ahead and kill me. I am not afraid to die. I am this old now. But let it be that all of you, my sons, be spared of any sin of Karma." That was all that I said and all of them left and I was wondering why they did. After they left, I went back up to my hut to sleep. Well, out of the blue, the unit's leader came by and wanted me to be his adopted mother. I said, "Don't ask me to be your adopted mother yet. I don't dare let you ask me for this favor, because I am afraid that . . ." They said that, at this present time, we are not allowed to have adopted mothers or sons at all, so, I must ask the permission from the village chief first. In the evening, the fever went down a little bit and I went to see the village chief and said, "Nephew, a unit's chief, came by and asked me to be his adopted mother. Do you give me permission to be his adopted mother?" He said, "That's all right grandma. Go ahead and be his adopted mother." So I just went back and told this chief, "Grandson, the village chief agreed to my request." I took one of my Cambodian

traditional skirts and altered it. I took a skirt and altered it to curry a favor to him. Because I was afraid of him, I took a skirt and altered it to make it into a pair of pants for him to wear. Then we were separated because he was being moved along with the unit and we were separated.

- Q. Are you still suffering from any other losses?
- A. I am not regretting any of my belongings at all because it's too late for them now. I am not regretting any inheritance or farm which I owned. I am not regretting or longing for my belongings. The only thing I am thinking about is the fact that I am separated from my father and mother. Let us just say that, all right, my father and mother passed away before this event. My husband and my son were separated from me and I am all alone. What am I trying to live with is the fact that they are gone and I am all alone and that is all. If my husband were alive, and my brothers were here, we are all together, and we can hold religious ceremonies, and adhere to Buddha's principles, and I would be very happy. I am still regretting about this fact up to now, I have not forgotten about it yet. Besides this, I don't have many worries or sorrows. It is all right. There is no hardship or pressure for me.
- Q. What did you do to have survived till now?
- A. I did not dare talk about anything at all. When I saw something that happened, I did not dare talk about it. I did not talk about something which I did not see either. When asked about something, I said, "I don't know." When they asked me, "Grandma, did you know about it?" I said, "I didn't know." Talking about knowing something, it was not like knowing about a serious matter. You know, they meant if we saw someone steal something such as sweet potatoes, rice, or whatever food for consumption. They asked me, "Grandma, did you see someone take it?" I said, "I didn't see it." I meant to say, people stole sweet potatoes from the ox carts; but you see, they were hungry, and they stole one each. I said that I did not see it. This is the reason why people did not hate me, because I would say that I did not see it. The Khmer Rouge would take the issues to be discussed at the meetings. They said, "Grandma, you are a cow and a water buffalo." I said, "I don't know, I don't see anything." I just did what they told me to do. I played dumb and deaf — for example, they told us to make some mats, and we just made them. We did not talk to one another. They would just make it and minded their own business and I just made it and minded my own business. When we were asked to weave it, they wove it in their group, and I did it in my group, they did theirs and I did mine. We did not dare talk to one another. When we heard the bell ring for lunch time, we just ran to get the food. We did not dare talk about anything at all. We did not talk at night. We did not dare talk in the day time and we did not dare do it at night either. As for the labor, when they imposed it on us,

we had to do it. We had to do it regardless of the distance, as long as they distributed the labor to us, we just went, and we did not dare refuse.

Q. Have they asked you about your biography?

A. Yes, they sure did. They asked me, "Were you poor or rich?" I said, "I was never rich." I didn't dare tell them I was poor. They asked me, "Do you have any brothers and sisters?" I said, "No, I don't. I am the only child. I am the only one." I didn't dare tell them the truth. I was afraid someone would recognize me. Some of my relatives were in the military, while others were in the police department. When they told me to feed the pigs, I just did that, but when they told me to kill the chickens, I did not dare do it. I said, "I am afraid of blood. I don't dare kill them." I was actually afraid to commit a sin, but I told them that I was afraid of blood. I was really afraid too. The blood was all red.

Q. What did they say?

A. They were mad at me but they did not do anything to me. Their cook told me to kill the chicken and I did not dare do it. I said, "Excuse me. I am begging you, because I am afraid of blood. If I go ahead and do it, I won't be able to go to work." They said, "If that's the case then don't do it."

Q. Have you thought that one of these days, you will be taken away to be killed for sure? How many times have you thought of this?

A. They took me away and re-educated me only once. They had the intention to arrest me twice. They took me away to re-educate me once, but I did not know whether or not they wanted to kill me then. They took me away to re-educate me at six o'clock in the evening, and it was dark when they re-educated me. They arrested me at noon, about eleven o'clock in the morning twice. Besides this, they had never re-educated me. After this incident, they had never re-educated me. But ever since that incident, I was always frightened. Every time I heard that they were holding a meeting, I thought, "I don't think I am going to make it." I was always frightened, there was no time when I was not. The fear left me only when I got to the Thai territory and the international workers went to bring me from the border to the camp. I was frightened all the time. There was no day when I was not frightened. I was always frightened days and nights, but I did not dare talk to anybody, because I was afraid of dying. I was still afraid of dying then too. I did not want to waste my life, I did not want to die, you see. Oh! Excuse me, there was another time, I don't know where it was, kind of like in the forest. At that time, they mistreated me once. The unit I was in, one more time, making it three times. They said, "Gee, she is always having a fever. She has a fever and yet she is able to cook her own rice. Therefore don't spare her; let's kill her." At that

time, I was already frightened. Then the next morning, the unit's chief came over and asked them, "Who in the hell got mad at that old lady?" This was what I heard. "Hey, don't you dare mistreat her. Try to have some compassion for her, she is old. Don't mistreat her, all of you young men." At that time, they would have taken me away and killed me, they would have done it before the unit's chief had a chance to get there. But they did not kill me and I was spared again. I was spared only three times. Excuse me, they did not do anything else to me. I was spared.

Q. Have you ever had bad dreams or horrible nightmares?

A. Right now I never have bad dreams. When I was in the camps, I used to have them. For example, I dreamed that I was chased by some people, but I managed to escape to the camp. Right now in America, I dream that my grandfather came when I was sick, then he was gone. Sometimes I dreamed that he came over and slept in the middle next to me and when I woke up, he disappeared. He was sleeping and this was very real, as though he was still alive. Then he disappeared.

Q. When you saw him, how did you feel?

A. I was feeling fine. I was only thinking about him, but he had . . . I remembered that I was only dreaming. I was not suffering very much. I felt bad, but it was not too severe.

Q. How do you feel that you lost your husband, your children, and your family like this?

A. If I adhere to Buddha's principles, I don't have time to recall my brother's and family members' faces. I cried indiscriminately; I am telling you the truth. I thought to myself, "I don't have a husband, or children, or any relatives . . ." I just went to visit a younger cousin. My mind just drifted away. I lay down and thought about this. I felt as if I were lost in the middle of nowhere, like I could not find either an island or a shore. But now that I am being cared for, my mind is stable and I am able to pick up the pieces. I thought to myself, "Oh, I am quite old now. I will not live too long. I should not miss him too much. He is gone now. He is reincarnated." As for my son, I am having someone look for him. I put up announcements looking for him, and inquiring about his whereabouts, this only son of mine. I asked the humanitarian organization to look for him in the camps. I don't know whether or not they are able to find him. As for my son, sometimes I really missed him very badly, and sometimes I forgot about him too.

Q. In the Communist regime, were you able to suppress your feelings, your sufferings?

A. They took me, they took me and had me stay underneath their house, you know. They took me and they interrogated me. They sat down, they interrogated me for a while, about one or two hours. They kept on interrogating me and I gave them the same answer. I thought to myself that I might not be able to survive; this is what I thought. I thought that I might not be able to survive. I thought, "What can I do if . . . let it be, let my merit decide for me." You know, I was thinking about my merit. That was all I thought about. Well then, my life in the Pol Pot regime depended on the Khmer Rouge. We could not control our life and whether it was to take this form or that form, well, I am talking about myself, you know. At that time, I thought that they could take us in any day they wanted to. As soon as we saw their faces, all we thought about was fear. I thought my turn might come either today or tomorrow. I would be happy if I made it through the day and knew that I lived for that day. Well, in this country, my life is free now. My life has been better little by little ever since I was in the camps in Thailand until now. I am feeling fine, having energy, but I have not been able to forget about my children and my husband. I only think about my father and my mother on account of their goodness to me, but I miss my children and husband and can't forget about them. The one child whom I am looking for is called *Ung Sam An*. My husband's name is *Khon*. My real name is *Lay Chea*. My son does not know my real name. All he knew was that my name was *Khem Pho*. People called me *Grandma Pho*. If I ask people to look for my son, they will have to ask for the name of a boy whose mother is called *Khem Pho*, and *Khem Pho's* father is called *Chin* and her mother is called *Nguon*.

Q. Have you ever had bad dreams?

A. I used to have bad dreams ever since I was young, since the time of the old government. The Cambodian people would call them bad dreams, but I don't know whether or not they were bad or good dreams, I would not know. I dreamed that an ogre chased me; he was not able to catch me because I was able to escape. According to the meaning of the dream, if the dreamer was sick, and if he/she dreamed that he/she did not escape, he/she will be seriously ill; if he/she was able to escape, then he/she was all right and would be cured. When we are sick with any kind of sickness, we would have bad dreams. At that time, I was a little sick, and I was all right, because I saw in my dream that I was able to escape. One, time I was seriously ill. I dreamed that I swam across a river, and I saw a big hillock. I climbed over the hillock and it turned into a mountain. I then climbed that mountain which had some woods; the woods were not too thick. I looked down and I saw what appeared to be something drifting in big sheets. All of a sudden I remembered something. Oh, they were the monks robes, my monks robes; I had sewn some for the monks. I sewed the robes and the under garments for the monks. I saw that the people hung them on the stairs' hand rail by sheets and also on the walls. I crawled and passed the place, and got to the land, and I

was spared. When I woke up, I felt like I had some energy. After that, I had some dreams. I saw a big mother pig and she chased me and I ran and took refuge inside the temple. I went into one temple, then another one, and I had to cross two or three temples before I could escape that pig. The pig chased me and tried to bite me. She was not able to bite me. I was able to escape. The old folks said that, if we get sick, we will be seriously ill if we don't escape; if we are not seriously ill . . . either we are seriously ill or we are not; if someone caught us in the dream, we were not cured. If someone did not catch us, then we were cured. That is all there is to it, when we talk about dreams.

Q. Have you ever dreamed about the *Pol Pot* time?

A. Since I came here, I have not dreamed about anything bad. Before I used to have bad dreams, but now I don't. I notice that, when I lived with my husband, he . . . for example, let's say that he had to transport some things for some people the next day, such as woods, or whatever, and they made him take an ox cart to carry the things for them; they hired him to carry things for them. I dreamed that there was a flood in the creeks. The water was flooding in the creeks and the bamboo trees were floating, but I was able to cross the flooded water. The next day, he went to carry woods for the people. When I was young, I had this belief, but now I don't dream much at all, I am sorry. He went to carry some woods for some people. It was in the evening. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the helicopter chased his cart and shot at it. He was able to make the cows run very fast and escaped. Then he tied the cows in the corral in the middle of the rice field. There was a pond there; it was called *Trapaeng Russei* in the north of the pagoda. I went after him, and he tied the cows through their nostrils like that, using a long rope. I said, "Grandpa, don't leave the cows here, the truck might come back. We should take them by the ropes and tie them under people's houses." At that time, the truck came by, and we led one another to go in the trench. As for my house, it was demolished by the shells launched by the Khmer Rouge, it was all destroyed. Some people's young tobacco plants were destroyed too. When I dreamed about flooding water, there would be a danger. When I was separated from my son along the way, I dreamed about a flood, originating from the northeast direction. The water was flowing at the foot of the mountain with a tremendous force. I did not see anything in my dreams, only flood water, flowing at the foot of the mountain all the time. I was separated from my son and he is lost until now. There was no other problems beside these. I always notice that, if I dreamed about flood water, it was not good. I usually did not have bad dreams. When I was sick, I was feeling fine when I dreamed about my mother and my husband. When I am older now, and I adhere to Buddha's precepts, I don't have too many bad dreams.

Q. Grandma, have you ever dreamed that you were in *Pol Pot* time?

A. I have never dreamed about that at all. I am sorry. I don't dare tell you any lies because I adhere to Buddha's precepts. If I don't tell the truth, I commit a sin. Now I am showing my strength through the eight jewels. I am not even eating the evening meal, why should I lie so that I commit a sin? If I dreamed about corpses or bodies, I will get lucky and get some money; someone will give me some money. If it is not a lot of money, it would be a small amount and it never failed, as long as I dreamed about dead bodies. If I dreamed about something, a long distance, it was not good. It was all right if I saw something in a short distance. I have never had any bad dreams in the *Pol Pot* regime.

Q. According to your beliefs, why did you not ever have bad dreams about the Pol Pot years?

A. I don't really know why, I don't understand this very much either, but . . . some people dreamed that they were arrested and would yell until they woke up. For me, I have never dreamed that someone arrested me. I only dreamed that someone chased me, it was true, but I was able to escape. I only dreamed about the ogre. Even if I could fly, the ogre still chased me; when I crawled, the ogre still chased me. Sometimes, I dreamed that the ogre was at my heels, very close behind me and I was holding to the *kanchreang's* (bushes) stumps and crawled between them, and escaped the ogre. I dreamed about the ogre chasing me until I was old, then I stopped dreaming about it. When I adhere to Buddha's principles, I don't dream very much anymore. But I guess the dreams depend on the individuals' beliefs. The beliefs are different from one person to another. If I committed any sins, I did not tell lies to people and I did not earn my living by killing animals so much like other people at all. I did some killings, but it was minimal. I followed my mother's example; she adhered to Buddha's precepts. All my brothers were monks. I followed my mother's example since I was young. I guess I don't have many sins and that's the reason why I'm all right. If I went to look for some fish with other people, I did not catch any fish like they did; they would catch a whole lot of fish. I just caught some that were as small as my thumb. I did not catch any fish. So, people said that this kind of person had no sin, or else this person had too many sins so he/she did not catch any fish. I don't understand this, excuse me. In this country, I had some dreams. I dreamed that my husband came over. When he came, he slept behind me. When I woke up, he disappeared. When I dreamed about him, I saw that he is living with me as if in normal life. I dreamed about him only twice since I went to live in the pagoda. When I did not feel very well, I dreamed of my grandfather. The other day I dreamed of my brother, but he did not talk to me.

Q. If we dreamed about someone and the person did not talk to us, what does this dream mean?

- A. The old folks said, "If the person passed away, how could he/she talk to you? He/she already died." We are alive and could not find him/her. We could only dream about him/her. Normally, if we dreamed about someone who did not talk to us, this means that the person had died. But, you know, this might not be true. For some people, when they saw this kind of dream, it always means that the person had died. The old folks in ancient time said that, in our dreams if the person did not talk to us, he/she had already died.
- Q. Grandma, do you still remember other memories?
- A. When I was living with my husband, he went to do the farming and I stayed home. Sometimes we went to do the farming together and we grew watermelons. During the rice farming season, we would go and plow the fields or transplanted the rice seedlings together, then we would come back home. In the evenings, we would go down together and pull the rice seedlings. When we finished it, we would go home together, and I would cook and we ate dinner. We had a rest, and the next morning, we would go to pull the rice seedlings together again. During the cool seasons, after pulling the rice seedlings in the countryside, we would take some rest. After this, we would go around and take a look at the water in the rice fields, from which we pulled rice seedlings. Then, we would work on the field for growing the water melons in the meantime.
- Q. Have you ever dreamed of your dead relatives? Whom did you dream of?
- A. I have never dreamed of my aunts or uncles. I have dreamed of my father and mother. I have seen them come here once, in this country, both of them; but they did not talk to us. Later on, I dreamed about my older brother. He did not talk to me either.
- Q. Do you still remember Pol Pot era's songs and slogans?
- A. I don't remember them, I am very sorry. Their slogan was "grow the *kapok* trees." First I did not understand this slogan, "grow the *kapok* trees." A long time later on, I heard the people say this slogan again. I was always thinking, "What does this slogan mean?" I didn't know. How do they grow *kapok* trees? Then later on, the people said, "You are not supposed to talk." When we talked they would mistreat us. When we talked, we would be wrong. I heard people say this, so I just kept quiet. This was what the older folks said. I remember another one of my dreams. When my daughter was still alive, and at the time she was still ill, I dreamed about a huge mango tree growing next to my house. It had a forked branch. I saw a spirit which came and wrestled with me. I was wrestling with it back and forth. I set myself free from it; but it hit me all that it wanted to. It came down from the mango tree and went to hit me inside of my house. Well then, I

was taken ill and my daughter was ill too. At that time, my daughter died. This was the time when I dreamed that I had quarreled with the spirit. That spirit was huge, tall, and black. It came down and had a fight with me. I fell down flat on my back, but I was able to flee. I was the only one who was able to escape, but I lost a daughter. At the time she had dysentery. I dreamed about this even before the *Pol Pot* time.

I am sorry to say that, at the time, I did not see any monk or feel the influence of Buddhism. There were no more monks. They did not allow us to have monks. I don't remember anything that has to do with the dates, days, months, or years. I don't know how to calculate the dates. Right now I still don't know how to calculate the dates. I don't know why. My children did not stay alive. I am very sure. As for me, I am just alive, that is about all. The only thing I knew was when I went inside the temple, I saw that Buddha's statues disappeared. I didn't see any Buddha statues. I only saw that in their places the Khmer Rouge installed the kitchens instead. When I went to the pagoda, I did not see any monk. But the old folks talked among themselves: "All the monks are gone; they had all the monks leave the monkhood." First they had the monks do the farming. At that time, I have not seen the monks do the farming. I only saw the old man, Ich, do the farming in a rice field inside the pagoda. But he did not plow the field. The villagers and the monk's attendants plowed it for him. "This monk" farmed a long rice field; he farmed to grow fragrant rice. Later on, they made him leave the monkhood. Ever since then, I stopped seeing all the monks in all the pagodas around my area. As for the other customs, we did not have them either. For example, they did not have such a lavish wedding ceremonies like before. The same thing went for clothing. We were not allowed to wear the same kind of clothes like before. Previously in the government, we were able to wear the *hoar* (hand woven, patterned silk cloths for the skirts) and colored blouses, with the *treasa* (checkered sarong) around our necks, short or long sleeve blouses, with the *Chang Khor* (traditional skirt with the rolled part put between the legs and tied at the back of the waist, Gandhi style), or with the *Pao Mung* (silk skirt) *Chang Khor* style, or the *Khor* (printed cotton with small checks and flowers); some people like to wear the *Sangsong Pong* blouse (round collar blouse with long sleeves and long body down to the knees), while others like to wear short sleeve or long sleeve blouses. In *Pol Pot* regime, they returned to all black blouses and black skirts. They did not allow us to wear blouses anymore.

How about the way they used the words; how were the words used?

In the old government, we used the word *Chai* (yes for women), *chut* (yes for men); *mam*, *dad*, *pe* (father, French), *mak* (mother, city style). During the Khmer Rouge era, they did not allow us to use those terms with the people anymore. They only allowed us to use *pa* (father--for farmers), *ma* (mother -- for farmers), older brother friend, younger brother friend, grandma friend, grandpa friend, and

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 7

- Q. In the Communist regime, did the Khmer Rouge still keep the customs and Buddhism and continue to preserve them?
- A. I am sorry to say that, at the time, I did not see any monk or feel the influence of Buddhism. There were no more monks. They did not allow us to have monks. I don't remember anything that has to do with the dates, days, months, or years. I don't know how to calculate the dates. Right now I still don't know how to calculate the dates. I don't know why. My children did not stay alive. I am very sure. As for me, I am just alive, that is about all. The only thing I knew was when I went inside the temple, I saw that Buddha's statues disappeared. I didn't see any Buddha statue. I only saw that in their places the Khmer Rouge installed the kitchens instead. When I went to the pagoda, I did not see any monk. But the old folks talked among themselves: "All the monks are gone; they had all the monks leave the monkhood." First they had the monks do the farming. At that time, I have not seen the monks do the farming. I only saw the old man, Ich, do the farming in a rice field inside that pagoda. But he did not plow the field. The villagers and the monk's attendants plowed it for him. This monk farmed a long rice field; he farmed to grow fragrant rice. Later on, they made him leave the monkhood. Ever since then, I stopped seeing all the monks in all the pagodas around my area. As for the other customs, we did not have them either. For example, they did not have such a lavish wedding ceremonies like before. The same thing went for clothing. We were not allowed to wear the same kind of clothes like before. Previously in the government, we were able to wear the *hoels* (hand woven, patterned silk cloths for the skirts) and colored blouses, with the *kramas* (checkered scarves) around our necks, short or long sleeve blouses, with the *Chang Kben* (traditional skirt with the rolled part put between the legs and tied at the back of the waist, Gandhi style), or with the *Pha Muong* (silk skirt) *Chang Kben* style, or the *Khien* (printed cotton with small checks and flowers); some people like to wear the *Bampong Veng* blouses (round color blouses with long sleeves and long body down to the knees), while others like to wear short sleeve or long sleeve blouses. In Pol Pot regime, they rationed to us both black blouses, and black skirts. They did not allow us colored blouses anymore.
- Q. How about the way they used the words; how were the words used?
- A. In the old government, we used the word *Chah* (yes for women), *baht* (yes for men); mom, dad, *pa* (father, french), *mak* (mother, city style). During the Khmer Rouge era, they did not allow us to use these terms with these people anymore. They only allowed us to use *puk* (father--for farmers), *mae* (mother -- for farmers), older brother friend, younger brother friend, grandma friend, grandpa friend, aunt

friend, uncle friend. But when we slipped our tongues and called someone using just the word brother and left out the word friend, we were so frightened that our eyes showed the fear. They made us call people "friends." But when they called . . . they talked about districts and the villages, and I don't remember them too well yet; even now, I still forget some of the words. At that time, they called these places regions; I forget about them, I don't remember them too well. Talking about eating, they made us eat at the communes. They took all the foods from the villages and put them in the eating halls. They made us work collectively and eat in the communes. As far as the labors were concerned, they made us go with the units and dig canals and we stayed in small camps, or else people would sleep by the trees and in the forests or in the hammocks, and we would do the labor by the units. The elderly stayed at home in the villages. We only got to rest at night, because in the day time we were together working. They did not let us sit far away from one another. Instead we should sit close to one another. They did not allow us to sit alone. We did not have a chance to go places alone.

- Q. Do you still remember any slogans or guiding words from your parents?
- A. My father counseled me and told me not to go out. He said, "Child, don't go around and visit friends at their houses; don't have pals; try to work hard." In the Khmer Rouge era they only used the terms "friend": "friend you go involve yourself with work, with other people." If we went to do the labor, they did not say that we went to work; instead, they would say, "You are not going to involve yourself with work? Friend, you are not work active." The word "inactive" means that we did not work enough; when they said the word "active," they meant that we did a good job.
- Q. Do you still remember some songs in the *Pol Pot* era?
- A. I don't remember the whole songs. They took me out and made me sit and listen to the people sing, but I did not remember. They sang their *Trot* song and their *Bok Ang Rae* song (*Trot* is traditional music with drums, wooden sticks decorated with bells; singing during the Cambodian New Year celebration originated in Siem Reap Province). They sang the *Trot*, Khmer Harvest Rice, pulling and transplanting rice seedlings songs, fighting songs, but if I tried to separate and distinguish them, I could not remember them, I am sorry.
- Q. Do you have any pictures or other photographs with you?
- A. At the time, I lost all the pictures. I do not have them with me. I do not have the pictures with me, I left them behind. You see, at the time, they told us to leave home. They told us that they wanted us to leave home for only one day and we should be returning home. Therefore, I did not have anything with me; I was

empty handed. As for my worries, I only worried about the fact that I was not able to be home at the time. I did not think of anything except for my house and a few belongings. After awhile, I stopped thinking about them. When I was gone further and further from my home, I stopped thinking about them. I was thinking about my pots, pans, knives, axes, and a small amount of rice which they put in the collectives. I missed my home and my country; that was all. In the old days, I was naive. When they made us go further and further from my home, I always missed my home; I always missed my home, you see. After awhile, I missed my children, my husband, my father, my mother. I went further and further away and I will not see them any longer. I could only see them in my dreams. I always thought, "My son, he is separated from me. I wonder if he has a hard time. Is he alive or is he dead? Is he having an easy time or hardship? Am I going to see my son again or not? I am feeling lonely and out of sorts, like a *kampook* in the middle of the river. I feel like a *kampook* that keeps on floating and drifting away. I am trying to do good deeds because I am all alone.

Q. So, this means that if you are living alone, you are able to do many good deeds, is that right?

A. I lived with my husband, my children, and my mother. When I lived with my parents, I did not do anything to make my brother's relatives have a hard time. I did not do anything to make the neighbors suffer on my account either. I never talked behind other people's backs. I never quarreled with other people's children. After I got married, the neighbors never got mad at me. When I left our village, the villagers missed me very much because I have never done anything to hurt them and make them suffer because of me. I always think to myself, "I do not need bad deeds. I don't dare kill animals because I am afraid that I might commit sins, and *Karmas* . . . someone or the animals will kill me right back. Right now, I am still missing my parents. There is no time that I forget about them. When I don't think about them it is not too bad, but when I think about them, it seems as though they are still living and that the souvenirs are recent.

Q. In your opinion, are the Communists also Cambodians?

A. I don't think too much about anything. But, if I think about it, we can see that all the customs from ancient time vanished. When the Khmer Rouge came in, it seemed like they brought their customs from another country and imposed them on us. I don't know where they brought them from; they imposed them on us. I wondered about this very much, but I could not say anything about it. I did not dare ask anybody about it either. I wondered, "Where do these Cambodian people bring their habits from that enables them to do those deeds?" But I did not dare ask anybody about it. I was wondering about it; it did not mean that I did not wonder about it at all. I wondered, "Why was Cambodia such a wonderful

country to live in before, then, much later on, why is Cambodia so insecure?" I was not only insecure, besides if I was able to flee, how and where to flee to. I would get lost. So, I was unable to flee and I just stayed on and on.

Q. Do you still remember any other of your parents', or your relatives' counseling, guiding words?

A. My brothers gave me some counseling, and their words were not any different from my father's. When I was still young, one brother counseled me, "We have only one youngest sister. We do not have many younger sisters. Your older siblings are all brothers, therefore, whatever you are doing, do it right so that you are a good person. You are the youngest sister we have; if you are bad . . . this would not do. We will hit you or do something." This is the reason I still remember. Another brother told me, "Go ahead and adhere to Buddha's principles. Don't kill any animals because you are always getting sick; don't kill any animals, just adhere to Buddha's principles." This is what my brother said. The one brother who is still separated from me now tried to tell me to adhere to Buddha's principles, and to try hard to hold religious ceremonies, even if for a small amount of money. This was what he counseled me. He was a monk.

Q. What does the sentence, "Just do good deeds" mean?

A. To be good means, like we should not steal, we should not go to see a play. In the old days, people went to see plays which were called the *Yi Kea* (*Yi Kea*, a kind of theatrical show in which there are singers and dancers with drum accompaniment), the *Rorn Vong*, and the *A Yai* or songs when a man and a woman sang songs back and forth such as uncle *Sarin* and lady *Saram Pak*, you know. My brother would not let me go to see it. He said that if I went to see it, he was afraid that I would not be a good girl. This is the reason why I am ignorant and illiterate. I was not allowed to go to school because my parents were afraid that when I was educated, I would do whatever I pleased and no one could stop me. For example, I might go around and compromise myself with men and do as I please without my parents consent. They were afraid I would compromise myself before they were able to arrange my marriage to a man. They did not allow me to have a relationship with anybody. They did not allow me to go anywhere. They just let me stay home. I was only able to attend musical performances or listen to songs, you know, such as the *Chapei* songs (long hand mandolin, used to play traditional songs, accompanied by solo singing), during religious celebrations, when my parents hired the singer to go and perform at home. But once in awhile, I did go to see a play. They counseled me not to go around and have fun, not to have friends (bad ones). They counseled me, "Honey, try hard to work and earn a living. Don't be lazy. Don't be lazy and sleep with the sheets drawn up over your face way until the sun rises high in the sky. Honey, try

to dispatch your servants to go do some business and do the farming. Go do some business in the eight directions. Try hard to watch over your male and female servants. Try to analyze their disposition to see if they are good or wicked. Try to analyze their behavior closely." These were my mother's counsels. She said, "Try to keep the needles, don't lose them. Keep the money in your bag. When you make your servants serve you, analyze their behavior. Try hard to analyze closely, to see if they are good or wicked." (a famous proverb).

Q. What do the words mean?

A. I don't really remember these words too well. I don't understand their meanings to well either. I only heard the old folks use them to counsel me. I always wondered, "Why did they say this? Why should I watch the servants closely? I don't understand these words at all." Please excuse me; whether I say this the right way or incorrectly, please excuse me because I am illiterate, besides, I cannot reason this out. I only know some of the meanings according to my mother's counseling, based on the ancient proverb. "Watch closely" means I should try to watch to see if the person's behavior is good, such as for example, if he/she came to live with you we should analyze his/her behavior to see whether or not he/she is a good person. The ancient folks were like that. This is the way they talked. We should just analyze and see if that person is as good as our brothers and sisters, our husband, relatives who live near us, to see if he/she is a good person or not. If he/she is a good and decent person, then we should like the person and consider him/her as your own relative. If he/she is not decent, we should just be polite enough to be only fair enough to be decent ourselves and not to be rude. We should not feel too close to this person. I don't remember the guiding words at all. I don't have any pictures or photos of my family at all.

Q. Have you ever thought or reflected about your parents, children, or relatives?

A. I always think about them and miss them at all times when we talk about this matter. I always thought, "Now they are all gone, I have a hard time. Before, when I lived with my parents and brothers, it was fine and I did not have to worry about too many things." When I lived with my husband, it was fine too; but when I live by myself, I worry about many things. I don't really worry about any major problems, but I am thinking that when I live alone, I feel so helpless and lonely. Please excuse me, but I would like to ask the doctor to please help me to make an announcement to look for my son who was separated from me. I would like to thank all of you for helping me.

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 8

Q. Can you please talk about your life in the United States in details?

A. When I got here, my sponsor went to meet me at the airport and brought me home. I got here in May, 1985. I came here with my adopted son, just the two of us. But that son, well, I always live at the pagoda, so then he . . . First he wanted to stay and watch a marching. I lived upstairs and he lived downstairs. When he was eighteen years old he lived in a separate house. He went to school. So, I told him to go to the Welfare office and apply for separate household aid. First he lived with me. He said he wanted to go to work and study at the same time. I said, "It is up to you, son." I told him to go and reapply for welfare and he said he was too lazy to do it. He then went to live in a separate house. Right now, he is still single. When I got here, the sponsor rented a place all ready for me to live in. He also bought some food and had it ready for me. When I first arrived, I lived in New York with my son. I lived in New York less than a year. My younger cousin went to live in Boston, so I followed her there. First I lived with her. Afterwards, I rented a place and lived with my son. We did not live with my cousin. I did not have any difficulty; I had enough. I needed a few things, meaning, some days I would need something, while other days I had some left over (a small amount). I had just enough to pay for the rent and the telephone.

Q. What are your feelings? How do you feel in your mind? What do you think?

A. I am saying that I am very happy because I have never seen . . . I am happy, and my heart is exuberant. I am so happy that I feel that my body is floating, I am telling you the truth, you know. As soon as I saw the light, I thought, "Oh, how wonderful it is. I have never seen so many lights." When I saw the cars and lights, I thought about my husband, and my children and my tears just rolled down. I was crying that time, you know. I was crying ever since I was in the airplane. As soon as I saw so many cars and other things, I just cried right away because I thought of my hardship when I lived there. It was a hardship to live in my country, when I got here, I had a car to ride in, some money to spend, and I myself did not have to work hard, besides the humanitarian people were kind enough to feed me. They did not only take care of one need, but many needs. So when I thought about this, I was happy. When I reflected on this a long time, I felt sorry for the people because they worked very hard. As for me, I am old and cannot work. I felt sorry for them that they had to do this. I have thought about this but I cannot do anything at all. If I am able to do it, I am not going to stay idle. I am going to work for sure if I can do it. I cannot work because my eyes are poor, I have no energy, when I walk my knees shake, therefore I cannot go to work. I would like to convey the merits to my benefactors who give me some

money to spend. I am thinking, if I lived in Cambodia, I would have worked very hard. It is true that I might not need anything, but I would have to work very hard. I have adhered to Buddha's principles and became a Buddhist nun for a long time now. When I thought about this, I was just reflecting about it myself; I did not dare think about other people. I am thinking about my relatives who are working while I am idle and I felt sorry for them. But I thought, "I have no energy. If I go to work, I cannot make it because my knees are shaking." For example, this morning, while I was cooking porridge for the monks, all of a sudden, my knees were knocking. So I informed someone that I could not cook it, so the person helped me.

- Q. What kind of plans do you have for your new life?
- A. At the present time, I cannot think of anything at all.
- Q. Why do you come to stay at the pagoda?
- A. I think that I spend time at home and some time at the pagoda. I live at the pagoda because I want to receive Buddha's precepts, so that I can adhere to these precepts. I am alone and I am lonely and out of sorts. I depend on these precepts to help me in the future. So, right now, I am trying to do good deeds for the people who are good to me and gave me money and fed me so that I can be alive and be able to adhere to Buddha's precepts. I convey the merits to all my benefactors right now. I am not thinking about them on one occasion only, but mornings and evenings all the time. Therefore, I am trying to adhere to the precepts, but whether or not I am able to do this to the fullest extent, I cannot say because I cannot say that I can adhere to a few precepts or a lot of them myself; but, I adhere to them and I am doing good deeds, and I am able to say maybe . . . I am just conveying the merits, I don't know whether or not they were conveyed to my relatives since I don't know about this, but I always convey the merits to them by saying, "Oh, you, my benefactors, you donated money, clothing, foods, everything, the pillow, the mats for me to sleep, water to shower, all of these I got thanks to my benefactors who gave them to me. Please, my benefactors, may you receive the merits which I conveyed to you, from the foods which I ate, may you have good health, prosperity, happiness. If you have sorrows, may they disappear; may you get to heaven through the merits. Wherever you will be reborn, may you have good health."
- Q. What will be your intentions for the next five years?
- A. I can't think of anything at all. But I think that I will save some money to reimburse for my plane ticket. I paid for it . . . I have contributed some money for this monk quarter. If I reimburse for the whole amount, then I would like to hold

a religious ceremony again, this is what I would like to do. But I don't know whether or not I will be able to do it, it all depends. I don't have money, so, I just think about it, for the sake of thinking. Please Angels, do not mock my words, in the event that I will not be able to do it. So then, I try to adhere to Buddha's precepts and do good deeds, because I have a hard time. I do this so that I won't have any sins; but I can't say whether or not I will be a sinless person. I don't dare say anything about this because it might be that I may have some *karmas* from my previous life, I don't dare say anything about it. I only have plans in my mind. I want to be free of sins. I don't dare to kill even the ants, the chiggers, or the cockroaches. I don't dare kill them. Even if someone said something nasty to me, it did not mean that I was not angry, but I didn't dare say anything back because I don't want to commit any sins. So I did not want to commit any sins, then I tried to contain myself and I did not say anything back because I might commit some sins. I committed some sins to the extent that I am living by myself, I guess it may be that I committed many sins; this was what I thought. I have not reimbursed for the airplane tickets for my son and me at all. They sent me the bills but I lost them; but I am always thinking about reimbursing them. I do not give up the idea of reimbursing them, because they were my benefactors, therefore I don't forget their good deeds and I must pay them back.

Q. At the present time, you live by yourself, and you think that this fact might be the result of your *karmas*. Please explain to us in detail about your *karmas*.

A. Excuse me, I think in my mind that perhaps in the previous life or in this life, I don't really know, I may have tampered with the bird's young. The Cambodians believe that we have *karmas* if we tampered with the bird's young and we will be separated from our own loved ones. We have *karmas* when we made the birds lose their feathers, or when we took the young and played with them. I would say that maybe I did this in the previous life or in this life and that is why I am separated from my husband and my children. This is what I told people. This is the reason I try my best to do good deeds so I don't have *karmas*. Because in this life, when I was young, I played with *Tradiev Dey's* young in their burrows (a kind of large swallow which lives in holes in the ground). I put my hand inside their burrow and I took out its young and played with it. When I had enough, I put it back in. I don't know how many days I played with it, or even how many months before I stopped doing it. At the time I was young, and I was still running around and played and was still wearing a pair of shorts, without any blouse and my upper part was bare. I ran around and went to play with the bird's young. I went to play along the rice fields' dikes. This is the reason why I said I might have the *karmas* with the animals young or they were from the previous life and I have know way of knowing it. They were the quails' young.

Q. When you took out the animals' young and played with them, were the mother

animals very distressed at that time?

A. At that time, their mothers left the nests and I did not see their mothers. I went and played with their young and I put them back. I thought that it may be the fact that I played with the animals' young that separates me from my loved ones, or it may be that when I was young, I played with the *phtuok* fish's young (a kind of pointed mouth fish). I prayed that I would not have any *karmas* and I conveyed the merits to them so that I would not have any *karmas*. I played with the *phtuok* fish's young. My mother told me, "Dear, don't play with them." I liked them, and I wanted to play with them. I saw the *phtuok* fish's young swim together, so I took a net and fished them out and I got two or three of them and I played with them. These young ones did not live. So I thought that I have *karmas*, that was the reason why all my children were born and died. My children did not live, it might be because the young fish died at the time. I always thought about that and I don't forget about it. I will never do this again. So I, oh, I am afraid of the *karmas* and I learned this lesson well.

Q. Do you have any more stories like the examples you cited above?

A. I only have these two stories. When I was young I played with anything. When I got older I never played with anything. You see, when I was young my mother warned me. When I got older, my father always forbid me from going out. He forbid me from going around and go poke around in the forest. My brothers did not allow me to go out either. Previously, I would sneak out and go. I sneaked out and played near my house. Later on, I was not allowed to go out. When I was older, I was told to stay home, do the house chores, tend the cows, and mind the house. Therefore, I was busy and I missed the chance to get out. They always guided me all the way.

Q. When and what were the things that made you happiest?

A. I am happy when I live at the pagoda like this moment. When I listen to the Dharmas I am happy. After I came to live here, listening to the Dharmas made me happy and adhering to Buddha's precepts made me happy. If I stayed at home, I am not too happy, because I When I went home, the longest time I could spend there was ten or twenty days. It was nearly a whole rainy season that I live here. When I went home, I came back after two or three days. After staying here for awhile, I would go back home. After I received the precepts for two or three times, I would go home. If I listen to the Dharmas I am very happy. When I heard some songs I . . . I can listen to them, but I don't want to. I don't have to do anything difficult. The only time I had it hard was when I could not walk or when I did not feel well. If we talk about difficult things like other people, I don't worry about that. I am very happy to live in this country because it is prosperous and

different. I did not have a country to live in and when I had one to live in like this, it's kind of nice. For example, I see many cars, many lights, many people crowded everywhere; but when I was happy, I thought of my family and my happiness stopped. When I thought about that, I adhere to Buddha's precepts, so I try to forget about it and block my mind from remembering my family. My heart tries to forget about them saying that I would not remember them or anything at all. But to say not to think about them is fruitless, I still think about them. I cannot forget them. I can only forget about them for awhile, then I think about them. That is the way it is.

- Q. In order to abate these sufferings, what measures did you take?
- A. I would like to say that I am living at the pagoda so I can make myself a good person. If I stayed in the village community, I always heard music everywhere, which made me think about my children and my husband, then I thought about my country because it is fun in this country. I had fun listening to music. When I went to the shopping centers, I had fun too. For this reason, I came to live in the pagoda to find tranquility, so that I would not hear much noise. When I don't hear the music, then I am able to forget about them somewhat. Please excuse me, and my heart, my mind, they . . . so that my mind would be at peace, so it would not miss them too much. It sure is true when I came to live at this pagoda. My mind did not think too much about them, when . . . once in awhile, I would miss them; I would think about them that way. When it was quiet, I did not think about them so much; my mind kind of forgot about them. When there were some people around and they talked to me about this and that, and I would study the Dharmas, I would forget about them somewhat.
- Q. After you got to America, what were the things that gave you the hardest time?
- A. It does not seem that there is anything at all. But I thought that I don't know the language. It is difficult for me when I went some places; for example, when I wanted to go to the doctor, I didn't know how to speak the language and when I wanted to go some places, such as the welfare department, I can not speak English. I wanted to use the telephone to make a call for a taxi, but I didn't know how to use the telephone. When I was looking for a policeman, I didn't know what to say to them. I would have to look for someone to help me or solicit help from my relatives. I don't seem to have any problems. If we talk about food, I got enough money and I need a little bit more money; I can make ends meet. When I had enough, then it is all right; when it was not enough, then let it be. Now I have enough. Sometimes, I used up the money; sometimes I would have some left over.
- Q. When you needed money, what did you do then?

- A. When I needed food and I had no money, I would take the foods from the store near by in Revere to eat for the time being, and when I could pay for them later, I would. I was not too short of money though. But, ever since I came to live in the pagoda, I am not charity. The reason I have some money left over is because I receive social security benefits.
- Q. How old are you grandma?
- A. My real age is sixty-two years old. My registered age is sixty.
- Q. Is it true that living in the pagoda makes your mind peaceful and abates your sufferings?
- A. Living in the pagoda eases my sufferings a great deal and it also makes me have good thinking. It makes me think about good things. I want to do good deeds so that I will receive good merits in the next life because in the pagoda, this is what I see. I am all alone and I am trying to adhere to Buddha's precepts. But, I don't dare say whether or not I am very successful at it at all because I am doing the best that I can, I am just doing good deeds.
- Q. According to the Buddhist faith, after we die, will we be reincarnated?
- A. According to the Buddhist faith, I believe that after we die, we will surely be reincarnated. We will be reincarnated, but we don't know for sure if we will be reincarnated into a human being or an animal, based on the deeds we do in the present life. This is my personal belief, you know. I believe that after we die, we will definitely be reincarnated. It all depends on the person. If a person does good deeds, he/she will be reincarnated into a human being or going to heaven, Brahma's realm. We, Cambodians, like to get the merits so we can be reincarnated into an angel in heaven like that, provided we do good deeds. If a person does not do good deeds, his/her life after death depends on the deeds while he/she was alive. This is the reason why we are afraid in our life. We are afraid because after we die, we don't really know what we will be reincarnated into. It could be that we will be reincarnated into an animal, it all depends, or into a human being. This all depends on the deeds we do. If we do good deeds, we will be reincarnated into a human being, or going to heaven, or Brahma's realm. As for the religious ceremonies, we don't know what kind of ceremonies or how we did them in order to go there. Therefore, we are trying to maintain our heart to be good, and to adhere to Buddha's precepts. If we adhere to Buddha's precepts, He said that we will be able to go to heaven, because we are doing good deeds. Good merits will send us to heaven, Brahma's realm, or Nirvana (highest stage of heaven, only Buddha is believed to reside there). Whether or not we are going there, that I can't see, I can't say, so I just do good deeds and wish for heaven and

convey the merits for my afterlife. I understand that when we do good deeds, we will receive good merits. Buddha said that we should not mistreat animals, for we will get the Karma. I didn't realize about this concept until I reached my old age. When I was young, I didn't know about this. I played with the animals. When I got older, I realize that it serves true that I have Karma because I played with the animals. I am not very afraid to commit sins, but I am afraid to commit the *Karmas*. This is the reason why I said that we must do good deeds. Buddha had these counseling words: "whoever is able to maintain a good heart, he/she will have merits." There is nothing as good as being able to guide your heart into being good. Whoever is able to guide their heart into being good, they will get the merits. If they cannot guide their heart into being good, they will not receive such good merits. The merits are just fair; they are not too bad or too good. So, I can try to guide my heart and I do not know for sure how good I am at doing this. I am trying to guide my heart according to Buddha's teachings, when He said that we should learn to control our heart.

After awhile, I am just happy, and it does not seem very important at all. The only thing is that, I just realize God! I just realize God! Two or three days later, I was able to rent an apartment. The apartment was the apartment in New York. I stayed there for a short while, when I had some business, then I moved. I forgot about everything. I moved to another apartment. Now she moved back to New York.

Q: What was your first question, how did you feel?

A: I was happy to see my cousin, but I The reason I did not stay with her was because I wanted to stay at the pagoda. I wanted to adhere to Buddha's principles. I always stayed at the pagoda, so I just stayed there with other people too. I always stayed at the pagoda. I thought, "Well, if I'm always tired like that, it is quiet at the pagoda and I like to live there. When I live at my cousin's house, there are many children and this makes me feel hesitant to live there. If I want to live at the pagoda, I also adhere to Buddha's principles, besides, I don't have any children. I don't go back and forth to my cousin's house. When I want to go home, I can go home. My life is not a hardship at all; I am already happy. The only thing that is a hardship for me is the language. I don't get help from my relatives.

Q: When you arrived in the United States, did you miss Cambodia, how did you miss it?

A: When I got here, I missed it. I came here, I saw many things, and I thought, "If I live a business and children like other people do, I might be able to work and have a wife like they do too. I might be much happier than I am now." At the present time, the way of life is good; I don't have a chance to go around and I am not working like other people do either. I don't get to talk to people much. I am only adhering to Buddha's principles, that is all, and I am glad because I thought that I

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 9

Q. What did you do in your life in the United States?

A. Excuse me, ever since I came here, I used to look at the landscape on the way to my house where I am living, and ever since I was in Cambodia, I did not think that I would get this lucky; I thought that I would not have lived this day. When I got off the plane, I looked around me and saw different things and I was happy. Then I thought about my husband, my parents, and my children. I came along with my adopted son, and My sponsor went to meet us and brought us home from the airport. Our sponsor gave us some food to eat and everything went fine. After two or three days, things went well. I realized that I did not speak the language and I did not know how to get around. I was happy, but I did not speak the language. Well, I just stayed that way. After awhile, I am just happy, and it does not seem that I have any problem at all. The only thing is that, I just realize that I don't know the language. Two or three days later, I was able to rent an apartment. First, we stayed with the sponsor in New York. I stayed there for a short while, about three or four months, then I moved, I forgot about everything. I moved to stay in Revere with my cousin. Now she moved back to New York.

Q. When you met your cousin, how did you feel?

A. I was happy to see my cousin, but I The reason I did not stay with her was because I wanted to stay at the pagoda. I wanted to adhere to Buddha's principles because I always felt tired, so I just stayed there with other people too. I always thought about the pagoda. I thought, "Well, if I'm always tired like that, it is quiet at the pagoda and I like to live there. When I live at my cousin's house, there are too many children and this makes me feel hesitant to live there. If I come to live at the pagoda, I can also adhere to Buddha's principles; besides, I don't have any car to take me back and forth to my cousin's house. When I want to go home, I just go there. My life is not a hardship at all; I am already happy. The only thing that is a problem for me is the language. I solicit help from my relatives.

Q. When you arrived in the United States, did you miss Cambodia, how did you miss it?

A. When I got here, I missed it. I came here, I saw many things, and I thought, "If I had a husband and children like other people do, I might be able to work and have a trade like they do too. I might be much happier than I am now." At the present time, the way of life is good; I don't have a chance to go around and I am not working like other people do either. I don't get to talk to people much. I am only adhering to Buddha's principles, that is all, and I am glad because I thought that I

A. might die on the way here, back to my home town in Cambodia. I put my hands up and joined them in prayer saying, "As long as I will be alive, I will adhere to Buddha's precepts." Now I don't have a husband or any children. I am kind of happy, but I am only happy to adhere to Buddha's precepts, to see my acquaintances and my relatives. But, while I am happy, I am still thinking about my husband and children and I can't forget them. I don't forget my husband, or my other children, or my country either, because I am all alone. When I tried to forget them for awhile, I remembered them right after two or three days. I don't forget about them. When I ate my meals and brought them to the table, I thought about my son, my children; I don't forget my children. I don't forget them, no matter what I did. Every time I had desserts, I missed my children.

Q. In order to ease these sorrows, what did you do?

A. This is the reason I adhere to Buddha's precepts every day. I memorize the Dharmas and study them with other people. You know, I forget them sometimes, and I am able to control my feelings. I am able to forget my children somewhat because I reflect this way; we are born and life is not eternal. We are born, and we will die. We can not escape death. This life that I am having, even though I have children and a husband, when my time comes, I will die. So life is not eternal. So then, I should not think about my children too much. When I missed my children, I felt that I could not help them very much. I could only help them by using my body strength. I could not help them to stay alive, only doctors can help them somewhat. After whatever the doctors can do to help them, it is up to their destiny which is able to help them. After I reflected about this, I was able to forget about them once in awhile. After awhile, I kind of forgot myself, and I thought about them all over again. Sometimes I miss them everyday. Some other times, I missed them every two or three days. I cannot forget about them too long. When my children died they were still small. I only had a son left, the one who was separated from me. Before I had this son left, his sister died because she was sick and we did not have any food to eat. I made porridge by measuring the rice with the cup of my hand, and mixing it with taro's leaves, while I travelled toward the border. When I got close to the Thai territory, I ate *woa waek* (a kind of vine), green wild bananas, and papayas leaves. These leaves made my tongue have a rash. I also ate taro roots. I thought that if the condition continued for just a few more days, and I would not be alive; I will definitely die at the border. But, when I got to the border, I was given some rice to eat. At that time I was extremely skinny. I was so skinny that I was demented. I did not know what was going on. I was forgetful. I would be talking about something, and I forgot about another thing.

Q. How do you feel about your life in the United States?

A. I don't have any more things to say, except that I am able to adhere to Buddha's precepts, and I am waiting for the precepts' merits so that I can receive the precepts and think about the merits. I pray to Buddha mornings and evenings, and convey the merits to those people who are my benefactors and who feed me. They do not just feed me alone, but also other people in general. I am happy because my relatives feed me. I like to live here because I have never known the United States before. Now that I am here and I know the United States, I am happy because I see the lights, the houses, the pretty children, and the American people are bigger and taller than we are. If my grandfather comes here too, he would be happy too, because he would see the Americans who are big and tall. They are also generous and nice and feed us well. I see some cars and some criss-cross roads. In Cambodia there are some roads too, and it is true, but the roads also have some forests. Only the cities would have streets, and they are not numerous like they are here. They are more numerous than they are in Cambodia. In Cambodia, we don't have many criss-cross roads. This could be due to the fact that I lived in the countryside. I did go to Phnom Penh once in awhile too.

Q. Did you ever have some thoughts about blaming yourself?

A. Yes, I have thought about this. I thought that I might have some Karmas, that is why I am coming here all by myself. I thought to myself, "Perhaps I have some Karmas from my previous life, and that is the reason why I came alone, like the *chorks* (aquatic plants) in the middle of the river." I am separated from all of my family's members. But perhaps, I have also held some religious ceremonies to accumulate some merits too, since I met some kind people who feed me very well. I have the doctors to treat me, and a house, some money to buy things to eat until I get old. I have some merits accumulated from the past lives, I am sure, but I have the Karmas because I am separated from my loved ones, and I am all alone. I am kind of happy, but my happiness is different from other people's. I am only happy when I adhere to Buddha's precepts, then I am very happy. When I go out, I don't have fun. I don't think about fun. I only have to go around and look at different things. When I think about my children, I am not happy. If people took me to see the zoo, I thought about my children and I was not happy. It would be a lot of fun, but I cannot have any fun because I am alone. So I just adhere to Buddha's precepts, so that I can understand my own mind, make sacrifices, and control my heart so that I would not miss my children and my husband so much. For example, when I saw the camels, I thought about my children. I thought, "If they saw them, they would be happy." I am sure they like to see them because in Cambodia there are no camels. I rode in a car and I was not happy, I thought it would be fun, but it was no fun at all. I had no fun because I have no children now. So I just stay quiet and adhere to Buddha's precepts. As for my life, it is not eternal, I don't know when it would end. My mind always thinks, "It is not eternal, it is not eternal." When I think along this line, I just convey the merits to

my relatives, and those people who are generous. I don't dare do anything bad. I only do good deeds.

Q. Grandma, you thought your separation from your loved ones is due to Karmas. Thinking thus, are you able to forget some of your sorrows?

A. Yes I can. I can do it because I am going to charities. When humanitarian people donated some money to me, I gave some of it to charity after I paid some of it on the rent, water, electricity, and clothing. With some leftover money, I spent it on religious ceremonies to convey the merits to the donors. I also want to get a part of the merits for myself, the merits from the religious ceremonies which I held, so that I will be free of sorrows, and so these unhappy events won't ever occur again. I wished that in this present and the afterlife, this kind of plight won't ever occur again. I could not do anything about it, was too miserable.

Q. How old are you, Grandma?

A. I am quite old. At the time, when I was swinging on the hammock, I did not give you my correct age. My real age is sixty-three years old. I was born the year of the Tiger. When I was old enough, I saw who were all grown up. My brothers were ordained monks. When I was old enough, I saw that my brothers were ordained monks. I don't know how old I was when they were ordained. I only saw that my brothers wore yellow robes. My brother Phnew, brother *Seng*, brother San, and brother Keo were all ordained monks. My four brothers were ordained monks, counting one brother who died. He is my younger brother, right next in line from me.

Q. How was your way of living at that time?

A. When my mother was still alive, there were some hard times, but I was still quite young. When I was sixteen years old, I lived with my father. I cooked rice for my father. He made me tend the cows and do house chores, cleaning the house. Our house is detached from other people's houses. There were not many playmates for me. I was just minding the house, and it was dead quiet in the countryside. When I was sick, my brothers took care of me. They helped my father too.

Q. Are your brothers still alive?

A. One is still alive, the one who is next in line to me. I don't know where he is now; he was separated from me, and I can't find him. He did not leave the monkhood. I was separated from him while he was still a monk. I was married and had two girls and a boy. Both of my daughters died. As for my son, he disappeared until now. As for my husband, he passed away in 1977 by starvation.

- Q. Do you have a family here in Boston? - PART 10
- A. I don't have any right now. I only have a cousin, but now she went back to stay in New York.
- Q. Are you living at the house in Revere or at the pagoda?
- A. I am staying with a niece who is my cousin's daughter-in-law. My cousin stays in Chelsea. As for my adopted son, he stays with another person. Sometimes I went home, but most of the time I sleep at the pagoda. There are two other older women who came to sleep at the pagoda only on Fridays and Saturdays. Another old lady who has a **poor right** also stays here. She is staying here because it is quiet, so that she will be serene. In this pagoda, I am the oldest.
- Q. Are you the head of those old ladies?
- A. No. Those old ladies have the same rank. Nobody is higher than anybody else.
- Q. Do you think that you are a Buddhist nun in Boston?
- A. I don't really know. I am afraid to say that. Before, I was a true nun. But now, I adhere to Buddha's precepts, only the eight precepts, you know, but I don't eat dinner everyday.
- Q. What did you do so that you did not feel bad or hurt?
- A. At that time, I did not know what to do. The only thing I knew was not to have anything. I did not know what to do so I would not suffer or change my habit. I just thought... when everything was quiet I thought... I thought about Buddha's precepts, you know. I thought, "Oh, Buddha, it is such a plight, where am I going to go to? I am not able to find this place. When I stay on, I suffer. I don't really know what way to go." I never thought that there was any hope for me. I would not think about anything. The only thing I thought about was to find

INTERVIEW 6 - PART 10

Q. When you lived under the communist regime, what did you do in order not to think, or to suffer too much?

A. Please excuse me, at that time, I lived with my husband. My son was still alive, and so was my husband. It was not until later on that he passed away. Then, finally, I was separated from my son. When I lived with them, I went to do the labor with the unit. I went to dig the canals. They had the old man stay home and he rolled the ropes. As for my son, he also went along with the unit. It was difficult to do the labor. I was not too sad about anything. It was kind of depressing. Our state of mind was not like it was in the old government, we did what we wanted to. Nobody forced you to do any labor. We made our own living. When we lived under the Pol Pot regime, we ate in the cooperatives. We did labor for them. Whether we suffered a little bit or a whole lot, we did not dare speak or talk at all. Even when we had hardship, we did not dare say anything. If they asked us whether or not we were tired, we would answer that we were not tired. At that time, we did not dare say that we were tired because we lived under a regime, so we didn't dare say that we were tired. Even when we were exhausted and had nothing to eat, we should still be just satisfied. We didn't know what to do since we lived under their regime. They gave us porridge to eat, they gave us potatoes and we ate them. Whenever I was too hungry, I would ask them for something to eat. I asked them, I did not steal. I did not dig things up from their gardens at all. I only asked them for something to eat when the foods were in the carts or in the eating halls. When they allowed me to take one, I would take two or three. In order to avoid suffering in that era, I had to endure a lot and bear everything. I kept quiet. I did not answer any insults; I did not complain. I always bore everything. Even if I had enough or I starved, I just said that I had enough to eat. As for the labor, even when I was exhausted I acted as if I were satisfied. I did not dare say anything. When I was exhausted, I didn't dare say anything that I was, neither did I say that I had a hard time. I did not dare say that I was hungry. When I had no skirt, no blouse to wear, I just said I was happy.

Q. What did you do so that you did not feel bad or hurt?

A. At that time, I did not know what to do. The only thing I knew was not to have anything. I did not know what to do so I would not suffer or change my habit. I always thought . . . when everything was quiet I thought . . . I thought about Buddha too, you know. I thought, "Oh, Buddha, it is such a plight, where am I going to escape to? I am not able to flee this place. When I stay on, I suffer. I don't really know what way to go." I never thought that there was any hope for me. I did not think about anything. The only thing I thought about was to find

something to eat.

Q. What kind of thoughts help you live through the sufferings?

A. I did not think about anything at all. All I could think of was to do the labor for them so that they would not take me away to educate me. When I heard people talk about something, I didn't say anything; I didn't talk, I was just quiet. Whatever other people said about anything, I just said that I didn't know anything at all. I always knew about nothing, just like that. When I saw someone steal something, because he/she was starved, I did not say anything about it. By the way, when I was sick, they took me away and re-educated me. This hand here was hurt, the scar is still there. It was hurt by the foot mortar and pestle. The pestle fell on it. I was using my hand to brush the rice away and it fell on my hand. The Khmer Rouge said that it was all in my mind. Furthermore, at the time my husband was still alive. They said, "Grandma, do you want to have another husband?" I said, "I want to have a husband, my sickness is real; I am not a hypochondriac. My hand hurts. If my hand does not hurt me, I can probably do the labor." They took me away and re-educated me one whole night, under their house, and it was pitch dark. There were two of them, and they took me away. They interrogated me for a long time. I had lost all hope. I thought to myself that I would probably die at that time. I always told them that I am not a hypochondriac, but that my hand hurts. As soon as my hand got better, I would go do the labor. They said, "Well then tomorrow go do the labor, all right?" I said, "How can I do the labor tomorrow if my hand still hurts? If it gets well, then I can go." They were at their wits end, and they released me.

Q. What did you do to forget about that incidence? Were you able to do it?

A. Regarding this incidence, I had no hope at all. It seemed that I could not think about anything.

Q. Were you able to do the meditation?

A. At that time, there was no meditation. All I was able to do was to think of Buddha's precepts, but I didn't know how to do the meditation. The only thing I could do was to think of my parents' benedictions, yes their benedictions, and Buddha's, and all of those people who were good to me, I remembered all of them. I prayed to their goodness, so the merit could help me, so that I may be able to survive. This was all that I could think of. I prayed, "May the merits help me so that I would be able to survive." Come to think of it, I didn't know where to go. I didn't know where to go since I didn't know the directions at all. In my heart, there remained only hopelessness. When I thought about the monks, there were no monks; when I thought about anything, there was nothing. So I was hopeless,

that was all. I had no other thoughts besides this. I thought, "I would certainly not be able to go anywhere like other people did." I didn't know where to go. The only thing left for me to think about were the merits.

Q. Did you pray to Buddha everyday?

A. I thought of Buddha's benedictions every night.

Q. Every time you prayed to Buddha, did you feel that you were less sorrowful?

A. Yes. I was only thinking about Buddha's merits to help me. This was all I could think of.

Q. You thought that Buddha will help you. How can Buddha help you?

A. The reason I prayed to Buddha was because Buddha helped me to feel fine, to be all right, so they did not take me away and beat me to death or kill me. I was frightened of the idea that they might take me away and beat me to death. So, I was worried about this since I did not adhere to any of Buddha's precepts like everybody else yet. So I just thought of Buddha's benedictions. At that time, I could not think about anything.

Q. Do you have any other beliefs which helped lift you up from hopelessness?

A. I didn't have any. I only have Buddha and my parents, that is all.

Q. When you pray to Buddha, do you have the feeling that you were in any one place in particular?

A. I lived with them, it was true, but . . . I remembered Buddha's benedictions to myself; I did not let anyone else know about it. At night, or when it was quiet, I remembered other people's merits. I always remembered these people's merits so that these merits helped me. I have never thought about that at all. All I thought about was that I lived with these Communist people, so I just tried to pray to Buddha and wished that the merits could help me so that I could survive. I did not think about going to live anywhere at all, no; but in my mind I thought, "If I can escape by any way at all, I would do it." I would escape, but I didn't know where I would escape to.

Q. Due to extreme hopelessness, did you become demented or mentally ill?

A. At that time, I didn't seem to be demented, but I thought about a lot of things. I was always thinking about things. I was thinking about things while walking,

carrying buckets of water. Well, you see, I was just thinking. I didn't know what I was thinking about, it was useless, but I was thinking all the same. For example, if I was hungry, I was thinking, "I am hungry, I am hungry." Sometimes, I would carry the water and went past the eggplants' ridges. They told me to carry some water, and I was all the while thinking, "What do I have to eat, what do I have to eat?" I would carry the water past the eggplants and then come back. After I passed the eggplants for quite a distance, I realized what I had done, then I came back. I did not think about anything else. That was all that I did. I miss my son very much, oh my goodness. My son lived in a unit which was quite far away and I missed him so much. I myself lived in another unit quite far away from his unit, and so I just missed that son so much. I miss him, and I can't forget about him. I miss him while I eat too. Whenever I got something to eat from the other people, I always thought about him since he had nothing to eat.

Q. Your love for your son made you have some hope and made you struggle in life, right?

A. I don't really know, but I do hope to meet my son, so I can take care of him. Now that we are separated, I always think about the day when I can meet my son. I am still thinking about that. I also think that, my son is probably quite grown now. He is over twenty years old. He was separated from me since he was fourteen years old.

Q. What are the other things which made you have some hopes?

A. There were none. My mind would think that if I should go to a far away place, I might be able to survive. If I stayed here, in *Pol Pot's* regime, with the Khmer Rouge people, I don't know what will become of me in the future. If I can escape, well, I guess I can escape. Later on, I became ill one more time. I had a fever and I just slept on the mat the whole time. At the place where I lived, the Khmer Rouge stationed many single men mobile units, about fifty to seventy young men. One day I heard them say, "Hugh." They wanted to take me to see a play. I had a fever so I said, "My back hurts; I have a fever, and I can't sit long and my back hurts." They said that I am a hypochondriac. When they came near my hut, they said, "Why do we keep her? She is a hypochondriac." As soon as the Khmer Rouge said that, the young men in the units of about fifty to seventy people said, "All right, we should not keep her." They wanted to take me away and beat me to death. So I thought, "All right, I am going down to the ground. If I stayed up here, they will come and arrest me. Well then, I am going down. I am going down while being sick." It was noon time then. I was sliding down little by little using my bottom. They were standing on both sides of the steps. They said, "Don't come down." I said, "What do you mean don't come down? I am very hot." They said, "As soon as you hit the ground, you will run away." I said, "I won't run

- away. How can I run away? Don't you see that I am feverish and shaking with fever? I can't run away." Then they allowed me to go to the ground. I went down and I went under my hut. I knelt down and prayed to all the male angels, first, complaining to the water and the earth spirits. After the prayers, I prayed to Buddha, the male angels, the water and earth spirits, and Lady *Kung Hing Preah Thoreni* (goddess of the earth), then afterwards I said, "You, all my sons, please go ahead and kill me, your mother. I am contented. May you be free of *Karmas* for killing me, your mother, because your mother is quite old now. I am quite old now, so go ahead and kill me. I do not commit any offense at all. If you are happy to kill me, go ahead and do it. May you be free of *Karmas*. May you be free of sins for killing me. That was all that I said, and they went away, all of them, and they did not kill me.
- Q. You said that they wanted you to go see a play. What was it? What group performed that play?
- A. It was a revolutionary play. In the play, the actors and actresses danced the harvest dances, with some scythes, etc. . . . They called me out to see it. You know, they always had us go and see it. Every time they showed a play, they called us to go and see it. At that place they would educate us, but I don't learn anything much like other people did.
- Q. Why did they walk away and did not want to kill you anymore? In your opinion, what do you think the reason for them to go away?
- A. That was all I said and they just went away. In my opinion, I think that it was the merits that helped me, Buddha's benedictions helped me, you know. Well, they just went away. I guess maybe Buddha's benedictions, and the angels' and forest's angels' powers helped me. The power of my prayers made them go away, and they did not take me away and kill me.
- Q. At that time, you said you did not mind if you should be killed. Did you really want to die?
- A. If I did not say that, I guess, they would probably arrest me. I did not have any hope at all.
- Q. When you prayed to the angels to help you, did you hope that the prayer would help you?
- A. I thought that only Buddha's, my parents', the angels', and my teachers' merits can help me, therefore I prayed to those merits. Deep down in my heart, I had no hope left at all. First, I was hoping on those merits to help me, you know; but then, on

second thoughts, I reflected, "Oh well, I should complain to those powers first, then I should say that I am willing to die." I only thought about this: if the merits help me just this once, I would be spared. I was thinking about the merits first, then I arranged my sentences. I did not dare say anything first before I prayed to the merits. It was kind of strange, you know. I was not sure whether or not I will be alive or dead because they were angry with me.

Q. At the time, what did you say in your prayers to Buddha and the angels?

A. The only thing I did was to pray to the merits. I was thinking about the merits because the danger was there. I thought, "Oh, only the merits can help me. Only the merits of Buddha, my parents, my teachers, all the angels, Lady *Kong Hing*, the water's and the earth's spirits can help me." I prayed to them, "Please protect me so I would be safe." That was all. I also said, "Oh, my sons, my children if I . . . your mother is quite old now. I did not commit any offense. If you, my children, kill me, please go ahead and do it. I don't want you to have any Karma from killing me. This was all that I said and all of them went away. That was about all. I would like to clarify that, at that time, everyday, I didn't have any hope. Every time I heard that there was going to be a meeting, I knew that if it was not I, it would have to be someone else who will die. Everyday, every night I had this fear until I was able to escape. When I got to Thailand, I remembered, "Even if I were to die, I will not die of being killed, not now anyway. This was what I realized. When I got to Thailand I remembered, "Well now, I am spared, I am spared because I adhered to Buddha's precepts. There were monks then too, and I am spared." During *Pol Pot's* regime, every time it was night time, I didn't know for sure whether it would be I or someone else who will die. Even during the harvest time, while we were harvesting, and when we saw the Khmer Rouge walking by, we would think, "Oh Buddha, the time is here again, is it someone else or is it me?" This was all I thought about. I am telling you the truth, I am not lying to you at all. I was always fearing for my life. I had no break from this thought at all. Even when I was eating, I had no appetite; I was always thinking about this idea. Sometimes I thought, "I might not survive." I always thought about this idea. It was not until I got to Thailand that I said to myself, "I survive." I said to myself again, "When I survive, I will adhere to Buddha's precepts. Even if I have some sicknesses or some diseases, I will survive." I don't know where the Khmer Rouge have taken my brother to. He disappeared. Besides this one, they died by natural death. At that time, the Khmer Rouge asked me if I had any brothers or sisters and I told them that I had none.

Q. Did you have any regrets afterwards, when you denied that you had any brothers and sisters, and you did not accept your own brother?

A. No. They asked me about them so they could jot their names down in the

manuals. My brothers are still my brothers. At the time, they took my brother away. Then, they came to ask me if I had any brothers and sisters. I said, "I don't have any brothers or sisters," that was all you see. I just didn't want them to know. I hid their identities on my own will. If I had told them that I was his sister, and they knew about it, they will undoubtedly take me away too. Therefore I am hiding my own identity. I felt very sorry for my brother. I thought about him and I did not want to part with him. He held me on his hips until I was old enough, and until my feet were dragging on the ground (I was big enough), and even then, he did not stop holding me. My brother was a policeman. When I told them about him, they would not spare my life. I did not tell them about my other brothers who ran away. I was just hiding my identity. I told them I did not have any brothers and sisters and that I was the only one in the family. They always sent me to do the labor here and there, I can't think of the places, I don't know where the places were. When I had to take the test to come to the United States, then I told the authority that I had a brother who disappeared. He is still alive. One son who was separated from me is still alive. They were the only two who are still alive. Besides them, all the rest of the family passed away.

- Q. How do you feel about this interview? What do you think about this interview?
- A. Please excuse me, I would like to tell you that, I think that maybe the Doctor will help me to stay well, I guess, and this is why I am narrating my own story. When I was over there I was frightened. When I got over here, to this place and I got interviewed like this, which made me talk about my biography, it may be that the Doctor can help me to survive, to live a long life, and to be able to adhere to Buddha's precepts for a long time. I am glad. I am not thinking about anything that is wrong with this interview.
- Q. Grandma, you said that this interview helps you to live a long life. How can it do this?
- A. I am not thinking about any worries. Because the Doctor arranges for me to have this interview, other people would know my biography. He is able to help me, because he would get to know me and learn about me and I am able to survive. I am lucky to have him interview me. When I think about it, I am very glad, you know. At first I was kind of nervous. I thought, "Oh no, dear me, what is going to happen to me?" When I think about it, why should I worry? I am with my father and mother.
- Q. Are you worried about something, Grandma?
- A. I was worried. Oh, I didn't know where they were going to take me to. Were they going to take me anywhere? Then I said to myself, "Why should I worry? I am

coming to meet my mother and father. I am coming to live here, and I am fine; and the people here are like my mother and father, the Doctor takes care of me. He has a good heart, so I am very glad."

- Q. Is it true that talking about your biography makes you stop worrying?
- A. I am not really worried about anything much. Later on, after *Pol Pot's* episodes, I was not worried about anything. The reason I say my mind is not worried about anything is that, at first I was worried, you see, but then, later on, I stopped worrying. I am glad; when I am glad, I stop worrying and then I am happy. It seems that I am lucky to be able to talk about my biography this much; then, in my heart, I feel that I am glad.