

INTERVIEW 2 - PART 1

Q. Where is your hometown, Sister? How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are you the youngest, or oldest? What did your parents do for a living?

A. My hometown is in Bar Pailin, Battambang Province. Formerly, my father's name was Saing Phou. My mother's name is Chau Lak. I was born in Pa Hee village. There were 10 children in my family. I am the oldest child. Phau is the youngest child. Between myself and my youngest sister there are many children, but all of them died, under Pol Pot regime, the one younger than I was next in line, was alive but was dead when he went down to Preah Vihear. My other brothers and sisters who were born and died, well, I can not remember very well because I was still small then. There were only 3 brothers and sisters who were still alive before Pol Pot regime, but now, there are only two; the others died when they were ordered to go down Phnon Preah Vihear (a mountain)... Thailand. In the old days, when my father was young, he mined sapphires and rubies. Later on he knew how to cut gems, cutting them into different styles, different shapes. I was quite small, and did not remember too well. When I was 7 years old, I studied Khmer. After 3 years in school, there was a war between Cambodia and Thailand. At the time, I didn't have these two younger siblings yet. I had another younger brother. During that war, my father took us to Thailand. My grandmother, my mother's sister, and her younger sister, and Maline Kim's mother, ran to the Cambodian side to live in Phnom Penh. We lived near the Thai border, fled into Thailand and lived there for two years. I have studied some Thai language. Later on, Cambodia lost to Thailand. Thailand won and got 4 Provinces. The Thai's told all the Cambodian people to go back to Cambodia. My parents took me back home. Our journey back was full of hardship. Maline Kim's father was in the government. He was a secret agent. Therefore, the people did not like him. They did not like my mother either. The people wanted to confiscate our house. My mother had many friends, and neighbors who helped her. They acted as witnesses testifying that the house truly belonged to my mother. They also said that she spent so much money to have a thatched roof put on the house. Because of these witnesses, the house was given back to my mother. After that, I went to study in Thai schools because I had studied in Thailand for two years before, I studied in Bar Pailin for two years, in what they called Par Sii. This school was in Bar Pailin. At the time, my mother gave birth to another boy. This boy was not the one who died in Phnom Preah Vihear. Right after we got back from Thailand, we had nothing. My father mined the gems, and my mother made sweets to sell. After delivering the baby for about one month, my mother wanted to go look for her relatives in Phnom Penh. There was an old man name Kou Nak. He was a folk doctor. He was a close friend of my grandmother. He went to visit Phnom Penh. When he got back, he told my mother: "you must go to Phnom Penh and look for your mother and your relatives.



Don't stay here; you suffer too much". The Thai's didn't like us. They wanted to put my mother in prison. They wanted to mistreat her, because they thought that my family was related to Mr. Kim Sok Teung. The truth was that my mother was just a plain person; she was innocent, and spoke no Cambodian. After giving birth for one month, she fled and hid in Battambang, in Mr. Ma Chinh Sam's home, a friend of Maline Kim's father. She hid there for a month, and Mr. Sam gave her 20 baht (Thai currency) for the escape, because she did not have any travel documents when she fled back to Cambodia. At that time, the Thai's occupied Cambodia and controlled 4 Provinces, Battambang, Kampong Thom, Siem Riep, the other one, I did not remember, since I was quite small, but it might be Koh Kong. The people who were traveling back and forth from Battambang to Phnom Penh regularly gave us directions like this: the bus from Battambang, before, went to Mong, then it went on to Svay Doun Kaev---. We did not know the way; at the time I was around over 10 years old. We never traveled around the village or town. I knew how to read Khmer and Thai. The bus to Mong changed it's name to "A Thik Thiwadith"; the bus to Svay Doun Kaev changed it's name to: "Mak Muong Saam". Both buses still have Cambodian letters on them too. One day we children and my mother took the bus to Mong. The old man Khuon Nak instructed us again and again to go right after we got off the bus in Svay Doun Kaev, and not to go left for fear we would not escape danger. He explained the way to us from a map, and told us to go to the right so we would not have accidents because we did not have travel documents. At the time, when we wanted to ask for a visa to come, we would not get it anyway. How could they allow us to come and live in Cambodia, when Cambodia is in one side, and Thailand the other side. When we got to Svay Doun Kaev, my mother got lost. When the bus stopped, my mother went to leave. We saw the house of the town's chief bearing a Thai flag. My parents said that we made a mistake. Then, we stayed there for awhile and my parents took my brother who was a month old, and crossed the road to talk to a Thai policeman. This man had a Kola (Kola is a word used for people from the Shan state in Burma) wife who lived near our house. She asked us where we were going to, and my mother told her that we came to buy matches. In the old days, we had to buy matches and soaps, because they did not sell anything like this in Bar Pailin. My mother also lied to the woman that the baby was not feeling well. The Thai policeman accompanied my mother to cross the border. He told her he stood guard that day, and that after two hours of patrolling, he would meet her. At the time, my mother was frightened, and there was a Cambodian compatriot who was very kind. Before, my father's name was Sam Saphou, and my mother's name was Cha lak. When the Thai's took over Cambodia, they changed our names and our last names. This was the reason why my last name was Wa Many. Since then on, my father's name was Swieng, and my mother's name was Bancheut. Both the names and last names stayed with us since then. Actually, my race is Burmese, not Cambodian. Since I lived in Cambodia when I was small, I have Cambodian citizenship. This was why our



last name was changed, because the Thai's changed them. Therefore, wherever she went, she used that last name all the time. This is why my last name is Van Many. About one or two hours later, my father met kind Cambodian people. My father did not speak Khmer well. My mother did not speak Khmer well either. As for me, I understood a little bit at that time. He said: "you came here with baggage; did you intend to cross the border to Cambodia"? My father was afraid that the man might be a detective, and he dared not say anything although he understood. The man said that if we wanted to cross over, he would put us all in a boat and accompany us to the other bank. By using sign language, my father said that he wanted to go there if the man would accompany him over. The man said that he would not charge a lot of money but only 15 Baht. Awhile later, he helped us put our baggage in the boat. My father helped rowing the boat, going over by the beginning of the river to the temple of Svay Doun Kaev. The man put down our baggage. My father had 20 Baht given by Ma Chinh Sam. He gave all the money to the guide and told him to keep the change. When we got to the pagoda, many temple boys came to see us and spoke Khmer to my parents. I did not understand too much Khmer. The monk asked us where we came from. With my minimum Khmer knowledge, I translated for them. I told the monk that we came from Bar Pailin and that we have relatives in Phnom Penh. The monk said that we should rest, and that the baby cried because he was hungry. He had someone tie a hammock for my brother in a hall and my brother slept for a while. Well, this is what happened; it was like a good luck for us. Old man Kuon Nak told us that if we should go to Svay Doun Kaev, we should look up a man called Mr. Karim, but his real name was Mr. Lon. In Svay Doun Kaev there was a Mr. Karim! He was supposed to be a friend of my uncle. After a little while, a Khmer detective came by and asked us where we came from. My parents told him we came from Pailin. He said that we could not enter Cambodian territory, and asked if we had travel documents, and asked if we were coming in illegally. My father got frightened and thought the man wanted to search us because my father had some gems. He wanted to hide them somewhere. My mother objected and said that a real detective would not take our possessions, and that he might be a robber. Actually, the man was a detective. My mother told the man we were poor and that we had nothing, and that we were leaving a hot for a cool place. She also told him that we were separated from our relatives who all went to Phnom Penh. He asked her for the names of our relatives. She said even if she told him her relatives and her parents' names, he would have not known them, but that her brother-in-law's name was Mr. Teng. The man said that: "oh, yes, I know him!". He then asked her if she knew anyone in Svay Doun Kaev? She said she knew no one there, except that a man told her that a certain Mr. Karim lived there in this town. She was supposed to stay at Mr. Karim's house. The man told her that there was a man by such name. My mother gave 10 cents to a boy to help us take our baggages to Mr. Karim's place. At about 5:00 p.m., Mr. Karim returned from work. He worked for a local government but I didn't know what he did because I



was still young. He received us cordially and gave us some foods. He knew my uncle. My family stayed at his place for about one week. There was a French man at the French Commissariat, whose name I didn't know, called for my parents for interrogation. He wanted to know how we came to the town. Mr. Karim knew Thai and acted as translator. My father told them that he came to Svay Doun Kaev not to stay, and that his parents and his relatives all went to Phnom Penh, and that he was poor. The Frenchmen gave us papers permitting us to ride the train free, and told us to go to Pursat. Then the real Mr. Lon came to pick us up and put us in a hotel, paying for our meals. He then took my father to meet a French Province Chief. My father was short. I did not know who, but I suspected it was the Provincial chief who told my father that he would give my father an I.D. card; I didn't understand much Cambodian then, so I wasn't too sure what was said. The Chief didn't want my father to go back and forth this way. He warned my father that if he were to be caught next time, he would be in jail. My father told him that he had no more relatives and that he came to this town to be with his wife. He then gave us I.D. cards. After getting the cards, and resting for 2-3 days, the authority sent us away, free of charge. Then Mr. Lon called my uncle. When we got to Phnom Penh, my grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles went to meet us at the train station. Before, my uncle lived at the Kap Ko Market in a rented house, and my aunt then came and lived in Phnom Penh. Then my father came to live in the capital for about 6 years. My father was poor. Later on, my younger sibling lived there for about one year. This one then died; it was the one who was born in Pailin. Later on, another baby was born, named Sok Eng. He had a Khmer name, and was born in Phnom Penh. This one died at Preah Vihear mountain. Then another baby was born. My father cut gems at Mr. Thun Pek who was Burmese. He owned a gem store. He only got about 30 or 40 riels a month. We rented a house and my mother made Burmese noodles to sell. At the time, I did not have a chance to go to school anymore, because I had to baby sit. After my younger (brother, sister?) died, my father wanted to move to Bar Kaev in Rattanak Kiri. There were gem mines there, in Cambodia, you know! There were many Lao and hill tribe people. There were also Burmese, Khmer, and Chinese, all races. Later on, my grandmother and my aunt went to live in the house at Kap Ko Market. Soon after this, due to my father's earning as gem cutter, we rented a house for ourselves. My maternal older sister lived in a house on Oknha Pech road, Phnom Penh. Later on my mother was pregnant. There were rumors about Bar Kaev having abundant gems. My father went there with an old man named Mon who took my father there. In Bar Kaev there were white gems, like Thai gems, but they were not zirconia; they were called Thai zirconia, and there were Amethysts; they were big; and there was another gem called Bar Pai Nang gems. I have seen American jewelry stores selling these gems here too, these Amethysts. The Bar Pai Nang gems were white like zirconias, but not as good. Bar Pai Nang is a name for a gem, just like sapphire, ruby or zirconia. In Bar Ve, there were 3 kinds of gems: purple, white, and Bar Pai Nang, which was the whitest of all.



Thai zirconias could be reddish or whitish. People could fire reddish Thai zirconias to make them white or blue, but they didn't have to fire the white kinds. The purple ones stayed natural. I have seen them sold here, just like in Cambodia too. Bar Pai Nang gems look like zirconia, but aren't as expensive as those in America, but expensive enough in our country. They are better than Thai zirconias. In Cambodia, sapphires and rubies won't wear off; they are called black zirconias. My father went to mine gems, but did not have much luck. My mother got pregnant and was 4 month pregnant with my young brother who later died in Preah Vihea mountain. After my father left for Bar Kaev, my mother got dysentery until the baby was born. Before this birth, the Japanese took over Cambodia. I didn't remember what year, but my younger brother was born. After 9:00 p.m. we could not go out anywhere. The baby was born at midnight, at home. My grandfather cut the umbilical cord. My mother did not go the hospital. Since she was ill, she had no milk to nurse the baby. My life was sad. As for the cow's milk, the government gave us a ration card to redeem for one box. At that time, we had to buy even matches. When the Japanese came over, we had to use a ration card to buy kerosene.

Q. When the Japanese came over, were the Thai's in Cambodia?

A. The Thai's took over Cambodia for 7 years. But when I went to Rattanak Kiri, Cambodian territory was back to the Cambodians. When the baby was born, there was not enough milk. We were allowed to buy only one can of milk a month. My uncle, Kim Ngoe Teng worked for the government; he could buy 12 cans a month; but he had to feed his children too. He gave us one can of milk each month. Therefore, I had to make porridge to get the liquid to mix with palm sugar to feed the baby during the day time. Sugar was scarce too. At night, I mixed milk (condensed milk) for the baby, since we could keep it for a long time. When the baby was about 4-5 months old, my father returned; he brought nothing with him, and he was sick because the climate didn't agree with him; he was bony. Bar Kaev's climate is worse than Bar Pailin's. After he got back for about 7-8 months, the British bombed Phnom Penh. At the time, my family fled again; we could not stay in Phnom Penh. My uncle knew about this, and went to hire a chariot in Ta Khmam to carry my family to stay beyond Ta Khmam, Prey Russey. Then, my father had no job, because the shops were closed down. At the time, my mother made porridge or Cambodian pancakes to sell. She sold sweets for about one year, when Cambodia was peaceful. When the Japanese left, we went back to Phnom Penh. We did not stay in the same house. He rented a new house, near a theater house belonging to Khoun Tat, Sileb market. There was no theater there yet; it was built 4-5 months later. When my brother was 3 years old, my mother gave birth to my sister, Thao. Cambodian territory was given back by the Thai's, when I was 16.



- Q. When the Thai's gave back Cambodian territory to Cambodia, did your family return to Bar Pailin?
- A. My family did not go back there, because after we left our house, it was confiscated. We would not get it back. Later, my mother gave birth to another baby. When the baby was two days old, my aunt died. She was Maline Kim's mother. My mother was grief stricken. When the baby was 4 months old, we had to go to Bar Kaev, the gem mine site again. We lived there for about 6 years, and we returned to Phnom Penh.
- Q. What did your parents do for a living when you were in Bar Kaev?
- A. Mining gems. I mined gems. My mother made sweets to sell. My father cut gems, because he could not mine them; the climate made him sick. He cut gems and Thai zirconias. At the time, I was old enough to cut gems too. After living there for 6 years, we returned to Bar Pailin, my hometown.
- Q. How do the people mine gems?
- A. They dig the ground. The ground has different aspects. Some are deep, and some are shallow. On the mountains, the ground was dug about one foot deep, or 6 inches, and we got to mine. The mine was mixed with gravel. It was put in a shallow basket to be washed in water. The big gravel were thrown away. Then it was scrutinized to see if there was any shiny stones. Regular stones were just stones. Before going back to Bar Pailin, my father died in Bar Kaev.
- Q. Did he die of this disease caused by environmental change (especially, mountainous area)?
- A. No. He was older too. He was almost 60 years old. He did not have that disease anymore. He died of normal illness. After he died less than a year, my mother took us back to Bar Pailin; we stay in Phnom Penh for about one month only.
- Q. What was the status of your family?
- A. In the old days, before Cambodia and Thailand were at war, it was a happy time. The inhabitants of Bar Pailin were not poor. We could not stay in one place. We had to move around all the time. We weren't poor enough to beg for money, but my father's job was not at one place for too long, and we could not stay in our hometown as long as we wanted to. In Bar Pailin, we had our own house. When we went to Phnom Penh, we had to rent a house, and pay utilities. Therefore, my father must cut gems, and he must worry about his salary. During my childhood, I was not too happy. I must take care of my younger brothers and sisters, helping



Q. my mother. I was the one who had to do the most work in the family. During the war, I always had a hardship.

Q. Nowadays, have you ever reminisced about your hard life as a young girl?

A. When I think about that time of my life, I was not too sad then, since I did not understand life too much then. Now, when I think of that time, I am very happy, because I have helped my mother, catered to her, helped taking care of my younger brothers and sisters. I am happy now that I am old enough; when I think of that time, I am happy because I had a chance to wait on my mother; after all, she had a short life. But, I only remember that before I was married, I was not as happy as I was then.

Q. How do you feel when you think about your parents now?

A. What I can recall the most, was the time when my parents were afraid of death. This was when we were crossing by boat from Thailand to Cambodia. I remember this incident more than any others. If the authority had us shot down, we would all die then, because we were illegal aliens. I felt sorry for my parents. What I meant by: from Thailand to Cambodia, was that at the time Thailand captured 4 Cambodian Provinces, and Battambang was one of them. My family fled from Battambang because it belonged to Thailand. I recall this incident the most because if the authority knew about us, they would shoot at us or kill us, and we would be dead then. That was my parents' life. I feel sorry for them. Sometimes, I recall happy moments in my family. This was when my parents fled to live in the Thai territory. My father cut gems, and my mother sold gems around. She got these gems from someone else, they were not ours. At the time, my mother made some money, and I was happy. I was young, about 10 years old, but I understood enough. Actually, at that time, a ten-year old child was naive too. That was the time when Thailand and Cambodia were at war. Some people in Battambang fled to Au Chreuv, with a river as a boundary. When it was peaceful, we could then return. This war only lasted a couple of months. When the Thai's won, they called us to go back home, but there was nothing left for us anymore.

Q. What did your parents look like, and what were their characters?

A. My father had a small frame. He was short. My parents had about the same height. He was short by a man's standard. His skin was yellow, like my brother's. He had many friends. People liked him very much. He did not like to drink liquor or go out too much. He liked to go to the Buddhist temple, because we were Buddhist. My father was not talkative, whereas my mother liked to talk a lot.



- Q. Did your father ever take his daughters to go outside, or chat with them?
- A. My father did not like to go anywhere. His friends would come around and visit him at home. Once in awhile, he went to visit them.
- Q. Were your parents and your family Buddhists?
- A. In Pailin, people went to the temple every full moon, the end of the moon cycle, New Year, rainy season (*coul vossa*), and end of rainy season (*cenh/vossa*). People went to receive Buddhist jewel (5 or 8 jewels-principles) for one day and one night, and fasted in the evenings. They stayed in a hall reserved for men and women worshipers. On full moon, and the end of the moon cycle, some people went to the temple, but did not adhere to the Buddhist jewels. But during the New Year, rainy season and end of rainy season, we must go to receive the jewels, at least for these occasions. We went to the temple, and received the jewels for one day and one night, and fasted in the evenings. We only ate in the morning up to noon, just like the novice monks, and the Buddhist nuns; afternoon, we could only drink water during the *coul vossa* season, the monks could not go out of the temple after sunset. As for the hall, there was a hall for women, and one for men. They did not stay together. This was a Cambodian custom, because Cambodian people were Buddhists. They usually held the *Kathin* (fund raising ceremony) in December, and the *vossa* season (rainy). We believe that this custom is good for us, Cambodians.
- Q. Are your parents still alive?
- A. My parents all passed away. My mother died after my youngest sibling was 5 years old; before I was married, when I got back to Pailin with my mother and my younger sibling, we had no house to stay in. We went to live in a chief of a district's house. He let us stay in his small house. He had two houses. He let my mother and my family stay in his house. My mother and I made fried noodles and agar to sell. Two months later, I made contacts with someone who owns sewing machines. I asked the person if I could sew something. At that time, they charged 25 riels per blouse/skirt. I paid 5 riels/per skirt for renting the machine. After sewing awhile, they did not charge for renting the machine, because they felt sorry for me. Not long after this, my mother passed away. I stayed there for about 7 or 8 months after my mother died. When I think about this, I feel very sorry for my mother then. She had no father, or younger siblings. My younger sister was small. At the time, there were only 3 children in my family: two girls and a boy. I was 20 years old then, my brother was 8, and my sister was 5.
- Q. After your mother's death, how was your life, and your brother and sister's life?



- A. I sewed clothes to support my younger brother and sister. I had no relatives to help me, because at the time, there were the *Issaraks* (freedom fighters against the French) and they infiltrated inside the cities from the jungles. Each one of us just fled everywhere. I went back to Bar Pailin. Our country was poor then. I had an uncle but he could not help me. I helped myself. There was no one else to help me. After my mother's death, I became head of a family when I was only 20 years old. After my mother died, I lived with my brother and sister. The district chief lived in front of our house, and he helped take care of us. When I was 22 years old, I got married. I sewed clothes to support my brother and sister. I supported them for two years before I got married. After my marriage, I still supported my brother and sister until both of them got married. I studied Khmer for 3 years. After this, World War II erupted. I fled to Thailand. I studied Thai for 4 years. After this I had to quit school to help my mother and take care of my brothers and sister. When I was young, I wanted to go to school. I was the oldest child, and I must help my mother at home.
- Q. In the Cambodian customs, do women and men have the same privilege to get in contact with the monks and to go to the temple?
- A. In this matter, both men and women have the same privilege to get in contact with the monks. But men and women stayed in separate places when they went to the temple to receive jewels, even when they are husband and wife, they must sacrifice that day.
- Q. When you went to receive the jewels at the temple, how long did you stay there?
- A. I went to receive the jewels for only one day and one night. I had children at home to take care of. When I went for one day and one night, my husband had to stay home to take care of our children. But we had to take turn during full moon days.
- Q. When you were young, you have received some education on Buddhism. How did this education have any strong influence and direct interests on you?
- A. Right now, I think that in this world, there is only one God. Here, there is Christ; over there, there is Buddhism. Both Christ and Buddha gave the same teaching.
- Q. When you were young did you feel that Buddhism was very important to you?
- A. I feel that Buddhism is very important, because it is my custom.
- Q. Therefore, then, Buddhism has a strong influence on you, is that right?



A. Right now, I am going to a Christian church, and I still believe in Buddhism. I am used to the idea of being born in the Khmer religion, therefore, I always remember that. I cannot leave this belief behind. That is to say, I am going to still believe in Buddhism.

Q. If you recall your childhood, what do you think was the happiest time of your life?

A. I had happy moments which I can not forget. According to Buddhism, and our beliefs, after I got married and had children, we went through a religious ceremony to make the power of Buddha stronger. As for other happening, I am not the kind of person who is looking for fun, that is I usually did not have much fun like other people. I usually don't go out anywhere; I don't like to go out so much. When I was young, and old enough to understand, well, I had fun, yes. When I think about then, now, I know I had a hard time. When I was young, I was innocent. I did not know when rice was expensive, or fish's price was rising. When my parents bought them, we just ate them, and we were happy then. But when I was older, and I thought about my childhood, after my marriage I knew then that my life was sad. When I was young, I was innocent, and I was happy. My parents had difficulty raising us, and moved frequently; I didn't understand anything then. I only understand that later.

Q. What was the part of your life which you thought was the most difficult when you were young?

A. The most difficult part of my life when I was young, before my marriage, was when I had no father, with younger siblings, and a sick mother, and we were all poor. At the time, in my entire life it was the most difficult moment. I was old enough then, I remembered everything. We were poor, and our mother was sick. I had two younger siblings then, and we had to roof to shelter us. I had to make sweets and carried them in baskets suspended on a pole across my shoulders to sell. That was the most difficult time in my entire life. That was the time when I knew what suffering was.

Q. What do you think about this interview?

A. I have no opinion about it. But I am happy to meet you and the doctor. I did not think I would meet someone who wants to interview me. I did not think I will be interviewed before. So now that I am being interviewed, I recollect the story of my past and this makes me happy. When I talk about the story of my past, I feel like crying, you see.

Q. Why do you think that you never guess that Dr. Mollica who is a doctor would be interested in your life?



- A. I don't know what to think. When you told me "Auntie, there is a doctor who likes to know about the life of a widow who suffered under Pol Pot regime," you just said under Pol Pot regime, not about my childhood, then I said, "Oh is that true?" "Yes, he wants to meet you this June." I said I don't object to that; if he wants to meet me, it is fine, but I don't speak English. I can understand some English, and speak some English, but I don't understand most of the time. So you said there are interpreters. I like this interview very much.
- Q. So, you don't think that we are interested in your childhood, is that true?
- A. I don't know that the doctor is interested in my childhood, no. But now, I am very happy, more than anything else.

Interviewer's comment: He said that your childhood story is very good and quite important.

- A. First, his wife's older sister, i.e. his sister-in-law, made the first proposal to my grandmother saying that she wanted to establish a relationship with me, well, that is, with her brother, because her sister was dead. My grandmother and my aunt said that for this matter, they could not decide; they had to ask me first even though they knew that Lek Neang, the groom, used to have a family and was a good man, never drank, or went out to have fun, or spent money for nothing, or gambled, and that I would surely love him. They asked me about this matter. I did not love him; I was single, you see, and he was a widower. My grandmother and my aunt then explained to me: "Dear, you are an orphan; you have neither a father nor a mother. Just listen to me, your aunt so you will not make a mistake. He had a wife, yes, but she died; besides she was a friend of yours". I had no mother to depend on. I lived with my aunt for a couple of months, then I followed her advice and I agreed to marry him.
- Q. In Bar Peilin, according to the customs, do people go to the fortune teller?
- A. Yes, they like to go to the fortune teller. But in my case, my grandmother said that she was old, that she was nearly 80 years old, and that we did not need to have my fortune read. She also said that she has seen him for a long time, and that she wanted me to marry him. I agreed to marry him because I had no parents to depend on; besides I had my brother and sisters. When I got married, I was 22, nearly 23 years old.
- Q. According to Cambodian customs, do the boys and girls know each other before they get married?
- A. Cambodian and American customs are different. What can I say? Well, we never went out together. When he asked for my hand, we loved each other like friends;



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 2

Q. How old were you when you got married? Who arranged for your marriage? Did you know your husband before the marriage?

A. Before our marriage, my husband and I did not know each other. My husband had a first wife, who was my friend. Since his wife and I were friends, I knew him casually. One year after his wife died, he asked my mother's sister and my grandmother for permission to marry me. After that, my aunt and my grandmother left Phnom Penh and stayed in Bar Pailin. They took me in to live with them for a period of time.

Q. How did people go about asking a girl's hand in marriage?

A. First, his wife's older sister, i.e. his sister-in-law, made the first proposal to my grandmother saying that she wanted to establish a relationship with me, well, that is, with her brother, because her sister was dead. My grandmother and my aunt said that for this matter, they could not decide; they had to ask me first even though they knew that Lak Neang, the groom, used to have a family and was a good man, never drank, or went out to have fun, or spent money for nothing, or gambled, and that I would surely love him. They asked me about this matter. I did not love him; I was single, you see, and he was a widower. My grandmother and my aunt then explained to me: "Dear, you are an orphan; you have neither a father nor a mother. Just listen to me, your aunt, so you will not make a mistake. He had a wife, yes, but she died; besides she was a friend of yours". I had no mother to depend on. I lived with my aunt for a couple of months, then I followed her advice and I agreed to marry him.

Q. In Bar Pailin, according to the customs, do people go to the fortune teller?

A. Yes, they like to go to the fortune teller. But in my case, my grandmother said that she was old, that she was nearly 80 years old, and that we did not need to have my fortune read. She also said that she has seen him for a long time, and that she wanted me to marry him. I agreed to marry him because I had no parents to depend on; besides I had my brother and sisters. When I got married, I was 22, nearly 23 years old.

Q. According to Cambodian customs, do the boys and girls know each other before they get married?

A. Cambodian and American customs are different. What can I say? Well, we never went out together. When he asked for my hand, we loved each other like friends;



- A. some people are like this. For me, I did not love him beforehand. When I was young, I went to school with his wife. My husband was 15 years my senior.
- Q. When you learned that your husband asked for your hand in marriage, were you surprised?
- A. I was very surprised when my grandmother and my aunt asked me about this. I cried a lot, and I said: "I don't want to get married yet." My grandmother said that I must get married, and that I must listen to her, since she has known my husband for quite some time, and that he was a good person.
- Q. At the time, were you disappointed?
- A. I was not disappointed, because I didn't love anybody else. I was busy working to raise my younger siblings. I never loved anybody before.
- Q. Did you cry out of happiness or of sadness?
- A. When I cried, it was not of happiness; it was because I did not love him; I have not loved him before.
- Q. What kind of a husband were you looking for? How old should he be? Have you ever fallen in love with anybody in secret?
- A. I have never fallen in love with anybody. I never had that idea in mind. I only had one thought: to have money and be rich like everybody. I didn't think about anything else. I have never thought about love. My parents all died and left me, so I only thought about work. Later on, I got married with him. He lived 7 kilometers away from my aunt's house.
- Q. Why did your husband choose you to be his wife? How do you feel about this?
- A. I guess, he thought that I was a friend to his wife, and we liked each other. His wife had a child who now lives in Australia. Therefore, he knew that, when he married me, I would love his child.
- Q. Did you believe that he loved you, and therefore asked your hand in marriage?
- A. I think that he loved me, because since I married him until he died, he was very good to me.
- Q. How was your life with your husband? Please talk about it in details.



A. After I married him, I felt sorry for me, and he didn't want me to work hard. He let me stay home to take care of my younger siblings, and his child. Later, his sister-in-law came to take his daughter with her. When he married me, his daughter was about two or three years old. He didn't want me to work very much. Well, we women, we were used to be working hard and having a hard time. Even when he was old, he didn't want me to have a hard time. He wanted me to be happy. I had to love him this time. I loved him because he never got angry. But when I got married, well it was just like now I had a family, and I would take care of it, and respected my husband according to our custom. The husband respect his wife, and the wife respects her husband; we respected each other, therefore, we had peace. There was nothing to argue about.

Q. What did your husband do for a living?

A. My husband was a gem miner. When he married me, he dug for gems. He was not a gem merchant yet. He also did vegetables and fruit farming. After the marriage, I had a girl. When I got older, he went around to buy some gems and sell them. He was not a big merchant or anything, only so we didn't have to work in the heat or rain. I stayed home and I bought my own machine. I still sew clothes for other people. People hired me to sew women's clothes. I did not know how to sew men's clothes. I could sew some shirts if people weren't too choosy about them. Later on, people brought some shirts to sell in my town, so I only sewed women's clothes.

Q. How did one mine gems? Did people buy the land in which the people mine gems?

A. The land for mining gems was a public land. Everybody just tried his luck. For example, let us say it was a field, but we knew that in Bar Pailin, there were gems everywhere. But some places had them, and some did not. People dug shallow ditches, some deep ones and some deep enough to cover the heads. Some people dug round ditches, then tunneled around till they hit the mine, which consisted of gravel. We took the gravel and sifted through, just like I told you before. Sometimes we got some gems, sometimes we didn't get any in one day. Some days, we could not find any gems at all, and sometimes, there was nothing for the whole month. But, when we found one gem, we could live on it for 4-5 years. One gem could cost one million riels. The gems in Cambodia are expensive. When we found them; they were the size of a thumb or a big toe. Before, the land in that area had no owner. We could get land wherever we wanted to. But later on, from 1970 to 1975, there were owners. For example, you were smart and got a land to plant vegetables or fruits, then nobody would go there to dig for the gems. During the 5-year period, there were many owners of those lands. I also planted vegetables and fruits. Usually, the people in Bar Pailin said they planted



vegetables, but in fact they were really interested in the land below.

Q. What did people plant in the vegetable gardens?

A. My gardens were about two or three km. from my house. I planted mango trees, jack fruits, limes, bananas, custard apples, sugar canes. I could not plant durions and rambutans in the garden. I could only plant them in my backyard. In the old days, I could not sell them, because there were not many people there to buy them. Later on many people, such as Cambodians and Vietnamese went to stay in Bar Pailin, and we could sell fruits quite well. People from every Province went to Pailin to mine gems there. There were many Chams also. Therefore, we could sell fruits very well.

Q. How was the marriage ceremony in Pailin?

A. The marriage ceremony in Pailin is different from that in Phnom Penh. The groom asked the hand of the bride in marriage. The bride's side could agree or reject. If they agree, and if the groom's side was rich, the bride's family could ask for a certain amount of gold or silver jewelry, like how many ounces of gold, some gold bracelets, earrings, pendants, etc. according to the wealth of the groom's family. If the bride's family agreed, then both sides would choose an auspicious day, and the groom's family would offer provisions of gold, clothes, jewelry and foods to the bride by walking in a procession to the bride's house. On the day of the provision offering, there were not many guests. On the wedding day, there was also a procession. There were flowers, and fruits in the procession which starts from the village to the bride's house, almost like the Cambodian custom. The only difference was that there was no gong to call the bride, or wedding songs like the Cambodians, because in the old days, Pailin was poor. Later on, people just followed that custom. When the procession got to the bride's house, in the old days, when Pailin was poor, and when I was young they took silver belts and connected them to block the way at the gate. Later on, they used 14K gold belts, or gold belts. The belts were connected at the bride's house, by the bride's family. This ceremony meant that the bride's family was selling or giving a price on the bride. Then they would open the gate. The groom's family then had to give the people who opened the gate the price or money, according to the means, and however we liked it, you know; the money was not too much, like in tens of thousands. After one gate, the groom sat down; then he opened another gate, then another. There were three gates. After this, we invited the bride to come out of her room. Both the groom and the bride then sat side by side and greeted the *Acha*, or wise man, palms joined. In the morning, they invited the monks for meals, like the Cambodians, the only thing that was different was the gong which we didn't use. After the monks ate the morning meals, the *Acha* blessed the couple who sat side by side. Then the groom followed the bride to her



room like the Cambodian ceremony. But the bride did not wear the trail, hanging from the shoulder to her waist behind her, or wear the *sampot*, with the ends of the two front sides going between the legs to the back and up to the waist, secured with a belt, (*chang khben*). We were dressed like the Kola (Kola is used for people from the Shan state in Burma). Later on, the Kola people wore the Cambodian wedding costumes like the Cambodians do. The only thing is that the bride wore plain *sampot*, with a long sleeve blouse, and seldom, a trail, but using a scarf hanging from both shoulders to the front. We only wore scarf, you see. Later on, we had a banquet. In the evening, we invited the guests to have a banquet, like the Cambodians.

Q. How did the people choose the day for a marriage?

A. They had a fortune teller chose for an auspicious date. Like, this date, this month would be perfect for a marriage. Then we sent out wedding invitations, since we had an auspicious day.

Q. Who was the fortune teller?

A. People usually went to the monks to have their fortune read.

Q. After your marriage, where did you go to live?

A. After my marriage, I went to stay with my husband. My husband's parents were deceased. My husband had his own house and a garden. He was, let us say a middle class man. He was a middle class man in the town. The people in that town liked him very much. People called him old man because he got old very fast, and looked old. In the old days, he worked very hard. His life and my life were not very different from each other. He said that when he was young, he made a living to raise his parents and his younger siblings. For this reason, he got old very fast, and the town people called him old man or grandpa. My husband was an orphan. His father was not dead, but he left for Thailand, went on to Burma, and never returned. We did not know whether he was still alive or not. He left to sell gems, you know, and he never returned, so we did not know whether he was still alive or not. We had not received any news from him. In our opinion, right now, Thailand was not a good place to live either; it could be that those people (Thai gangs?) killed him at the border, who knows? Usually, he left the country to sell gems, and would go on to Burma for a visit because he had relatives there. His grandparents were from Burma. The Kola people came from Rangoon. But in his last trip, he disappeared, and we did not know where he was.

Q. How many boys and girls did you have?

A. I had two boys and two girls who lived with us. My husband died under Pol Pot's



regime, after leaving home for one month and a half, because he was sick. He was also weak, because he was old. He had to walk very far in the rain and mud, plus he had nothing to eat. He got some swellings. You see, when we left home, we did not take any foods with us. The military said that we did not need to take any food with us, and that they would provide us with some foods, and that we would be coming back in three days. Then we never returned home. How could we take anything with us when we thought that our house was near by. But when we left, we went on and on for ever. The reasons they gave us for leaving home for three days were that Thailand will drop bombs on us.

Q. Did your children go to school?

A. Yes. They went to school; but they were still young because I had children quite late. I had children long after I got married. The oldest child went to school for three or four years. How could a town in Pailin, a countryside, have higher education? In the city of Pailin, they had a big school; but I lived in the countryside in a village called Bar Ya Kha, near the Thai border. There were only normal schools. The younger one went to school for about three years. The two little ones did not go to school; they never went to school. They did study Thai language in Thailand. The oldest one learned to cut gems from the owner of the shop. If we wanted to learn to cut gems from the owner of the shops, in his house, we must buy a machine for him. Then we learned the trade until we knew it well. When we stopped working for him, we would leave empty handed, because we only got the skills of the trade. The machine cost 21,000 riels. After we learned the trade, we could work for the owner at his place. If we didn't like it, we could go work someplace else. When we cut gems for them, we counted by carats, such as the number of gems that would make one carat, and we get paid once. At that time, my husband took care of the garden part of the time, and bought and sold gems part of the time because he was old. He stopped mining gems for about 6 years.

Q. What was your job?

A. I sewed until I was 37 years old, then I stopped. Later on, I went to tend to the garden and care for my children. I have bought some gems too.

Q. After your marriage, was your life and your husband's easier than before?

A. Yes. In my opinion, my life was easier than before, because I had support. After my parent's death, I had no one to depend on. In Cambodia, if I did not want to work, my husband could work and support me. But, you know, I could not stay still. I wanted to make money, so I worked by sewing some clothes. I earned extra money to help him out, because he was a good man. He didn't want me to



work, but I wanted to work.

Q. What were the qualities that bonded your relationship with your husband? How close were you to him?

A. He was a very mature man. He loved me with all his heart. He loved my grandmother, my aunt, and my younger siblings like his own family. He was a sincere man. We knew that he was a good man. Actually, between husband and wife, one of them does not have to have money for the other one to say that he is a good person. When we knew that he loved our family, that was the special touch. He loved my family, my younger siblings, my aunt, and my grandmother; I think that this fact alone told me that he was a good man.

Q. What were the happy moments that you and your husband shared together?

A. Normally, in my hometown, the workers did not have much fun in their life like the city people did. I was used to hardship. When my husband was kind to me, it made me happy. I did not have any other happiness beside this one, no. In my hometown, when it got very hot, we would go to visit Phnom Penh, Angkor Wat, or Battambang, that was all. We the wives, when our husbands made us happy, we were very happy indeed. My husband never made me unhappy, never. He was very good to me, until the day he died. The people praised him. My aunt said: "well, you see, you were lucky; you believed me, and he was old, but he was a good man", it worked both ways equally. If he did not love, me, I got nothing. So I told her that I believed her. I was grateful to both my grandmother and my aunt from that day onward.

Q. What does an old husband mean to a young wife?

A. For me, an old husband means nothing. Before I got married, I saw that he was older than I was, and I said that he was old. Oh, you know, it is only normal, when we never fall in love before, plus the fact that we did not get to know the man well, and then his age is much more than ours, well, we just didn't love him, that was all. But I followed my grandmother's and my aunt's advice, and my life was good. I had no one to depend on, I must listen to them.

Q. Your husband was 15 years older than you were. After the marriage, have you ever thought that he would be younger or that you would get older like he did?

A. I thought that I would get as old as he was.

Q. You have a daughter. Do you think that you will arrange her marriage with a man who is 15 years her senior?



- A. In this day and age, I don't want to force her. If she loves somebody, I will comply with her wish.
- Q. Are there any important points or interests in marrying a man who is 15 years older than we are?
- A. In this instance, we Cambodians don't think about this matter carefully. Once we were married and had children, we didn't think about anything else. Usually, sex didn't give us any happiness. We were happy because we lived harmoniously, respecting each other; this is what makes us Cambodians happy. We don't think about anything else. Some people thought that if they let their daughters marry older men, these men would live a short life and die, leaving their wives as widows sooner than they normally would. For my grandmother, she did not think about anything. She reasoned that, we, women depend on our husbands. If the husbands are good men, we will have peace. She didn't care about wealth or poverty. She only wanted her granddaughter to have peace. Even if the man was extremely wealthy, but they didn't love us women, then we would suffer. I respected my grandmother and my aunt; when I deliberated, I could say that my husband was a really good man. I didn't think about any other thing than this fact alone. I respected him as my husband. Sometimes I respected him as much as I did my father. He was a good man.
- Q. What kind of sorrows did you have in your family's life?
- A. When my husband was alive, I didn't have much sorrow. My life was normal. It wasn't extremely glamorous either. But I did not have any worry about starving; it was just normal, like everybody else.
- Q. How long had you been married?
- A. I had been married for 21 years.
- Q. Do you miss him at the present time? Are you thinking of your husband?
- A. Sometimes, I missed my late husband very much. Sometimes, I missed my little brother very much. My little brother died when the Thai's had us go down along the Dangrek mountain range.
- Q. How did your brother die?
- A. My brother died of exhaustion from descending the mountain. His older sister was sick, and the younger sister was sick too. He carried luggage, and he was too exhausted. Then he had a fever. After 5 days of fever, he died during the journey.



My brother was exhausted and got sick. During our trip, going down the mountains, it was raining and hot. We went down the Dangrek mountain range. He died in a village. I don't remember the name of this village. My little brother died during Pol Pot regime. He was 30 years old. Well nowadays, I am happy physically, but my mind is always thinking of my younger siblings. Well, you see, my husband died because he was old. But my younger siblings went through thick and thin with me, and they died--- nowadays I am physically happy, but my heart is thinking a lot about my younger siblings. My younger brother died when he was only over 30 years old. His daughter died at the age of three during Pol Pot regime.

Q. When you thought of your younger siblings, did you dream about them, or did you remember souvenirs with them?

A. I never dreamed about anything during Pol Pot regime. If I dream about them, it was in Pailin when Cambodia was peaceful.

Q. When you dreamed of them, did you talk to them?

A. I dreamed that my younger siblings walked, but I did not get to talk to them. Sometimes I was happy when I saw them in my dream. Some other times, I cried. Sometimes I dreamed of my niece. When I saw her, she was still small. I talked to her, and she called me big auntie. I only dreamed about the times when I played with her and she smiled at me. When she called me big auntie, I held her, just like when she was small. As for my husband, I used to dream about him too, just like my younger brother. I saw him in our hometown, in our house, smoking cigarettes.

Q. What do you think those dreams mean?

A. We Cambodians say that, our mind thinks about something, such as, if either our younger sibling or our husband are not dead, and if we came over to America, they would join us and we were all happy together. But when we came here alone, we must think about them too. When we suffered, we starved together; especially, my younger siblings, they were so young. I used to have gone through hardship with my younger siblings. My husband died so fast, and he did not have to go through hardship like me. I have gone through a lot with my younger siblings, therefore, I feel very sorry for them. Sometimes, when I went to work, I thought about them, how young they were. If they had not died, they could come here and work and live like everybody else. This is the reason why I think and miss my younger siblings more than I did my husband.

Q. Did you raise your younger siblings since they were small?



A. I raised them when they were small. I was like a mother to them. For example, right now, my younger sister called me mom, and sometimes she called me sister, you see.

Q. How many years was your younger brother younger than you?

A. My brother was 17 years my junior. As for my younger sister who living with me, she is the youngest one. I am her older sister, but I am just like a mother to her.

Q. Did you have any souvenirs with you husband?

A. For us Cambodians, we don't think about souvenirs. We are only thinking about the times when we held religious ceremonies together. We really did not go through a plight together. I only think about those times when we held religious ceremonies together.

Q. After your marriage, how did you practice religion?

A. I didn't really understand Buddhism that much. I just went to the Buddhist temple, well, it was like we were Buddhist, and we adhered to the 5 Buddhist *Dharmas* (principles) especially. We don't kill, we don't steal, we don't lie, we are married and we don't commit adultery, and we don't drink. These are the most important principles in the Cambodian religion. When we are used to being Buddhist, we stick to Buddhism wherever we go, even until now, I still hold on to it. When we came here, we went to church. The church people also want us to be good and not to do bad deeds. Therefore, I think that both Christianity and Buddhism are not very different. When I was in Cambodia, I used to take my children to the temple. I think that practicing Buddhism for the Cambodian people and the Kola (Burmese) is not very different. Usually in Cambodia, in our house, we go through the rituals of giving offerings to Buddha, such as flowers and water. We prayed to Buddha, and went around our business. We prayed to Buddha twice a day, once in the morning, and another time in the evening. My child was very small then; on Buddhist Saint day, when we woke up early in the morning to cook foods for offerings to Buddha, we would wake her up, and she would pray to Buddha too. But when we didn't wake her up, then it would be alright too. It was not like with the adults, you see.

Q. In Maine, do you have a Buddha statue?

A. I don't have a Buddha statue, but before I go to sleep, I always pray to the goodness of Buddha, the *Dharmas*, and *Sangha* (monks). I always pray for good health for our family, and for a well being when I pray to Buddha, the *Dharmas*,







INTERVIEW 2 - PART 3

Q. Please talk about your life under Pol Pot. When did the Khmer Rouge take over Pailin? What did they do to the people in Pailin? Where did they send your family too? What did they do to your family?

A. The Khmer Rouge took over Pailin during our Cambodian New Year. In our country, we celebrated New Year on the 13th of April. They came into Pailin about one week later. I think it was on the 18th. Well, I think they went into Pailin after the 17th. I don't remember what day or when they took over Pailin; I only remember it was after our New Year. When the Khmer Rouge went into Pailin, at first we were frightened. The Province Governor and other officials fled to Thailand. My home town is Bar Yakha and is near the Thai border, and we took advantage of the short distance it would take us to get out. My uncle and my aunt came to stay at my house. I don't really recall what day it was, but it was at least one week later that a person from the main town in Pailin came to inform us that "we should not be afraid anymore", and we should not stand on guard. Our friends will come over tomorrow. We should go and greet them. Prince Sihanouk, our Prince Father is coming back to Cambodia." Well, the people were not frightened anymore. In the morning, we all went to greet the Khmer Rouge, while people were beating the drums and playing music. We went to the place called Dey Krar Horm, the village of Dey Krar Horm. We went to greet the friends, Pol Pot's clan. The young Khmer Rouge came in and stayed for about one night. The next night, there were some more. There were soldiers (both men and women) called Yothea. I don't know how it was in the main Pailin area. I only know about my village. We greeted them by making food for them. They had carts going from house to house getting a bundle of rice and soup every morning and night. After that, those comrades said that we should continue our New Year celebration, you know, that we should celebrate our New Year again. So, the people invited the monks for religious ceremonies again. They let us celebrate for three days. We didn't even finish our celebration when a military man came to tell us to stop the religious chanting and so we did. It was about the end of April, about the 29th, when the Khmer Rouge spread the news, telling those people who did not live in Pailin to go back to their home town respectively. Only those who live in Pailin can stay. Some people stayed on, some left. The people of Pailin were allowed to stay in their home town. First I packed my things.

On May 1st, the Khmer Rouge chased us out of Pailin. At 9:00 AM, a comrade said: "All the people in Pailin, both in the Bar Thom (main Pailin), and Bar Yakha, must get out of Pailin in three days. You didn't need to take anything with you. We will take care of your belongings. The Thais will bomb Pailin. There



will be fighting in Pailin." We were frightened, and we left without taking anything with us. Well, we took some rice and some clothes for my daughter. I could only take 2-3 sets of clothing for my older daughter and myself, because they told us not to take anything with us, and that they would take care of our belongings for us. Some people were stubborn, and some people were shot dead. They shot people in their own homes. There was a family. The father was a folk doctor; he had many children; they were killed. So were the Buddhist monks and nuns. As for my family, at that time, there were 12 people in my house, not counting my younger siblings. At that time, my younger sister lived with her husband. They had their own house. I am counting my own family and my children, my sons-in-law, my younger siblings and their spouses, and my nephews and nieces, all together 12 persons. We left our home that morning. Well you see, there were so many people, and we could not advance fast enough. We traveled slowly. We got to a place, about more than a kilo away from our house, called Tee factory; we ate there for awhile and we continued our trip. We got to a village called Chra. The Cambodian people lived in Chra village ever since the old days. There was a temple there. There was a rain storm that day, and we had to stay around there for about two hours. We were then driven away again. The people from Bar Yakha were driven to Bar Thom, I think. We got to Au Ta Pouk bridge. We were driven away again, and we went back. My younger sister was still young. She had a fever and she was drenched with the rain. It was horrible. She was crying very hard. We went back to the coffee plantation and stayed there one night. We could not move anymore because there were thousands and thousands of people. All the Cambodians, Chinese, and Vietnamese co-merged together. Some went through Battambang Province. I don't know where these people went, because we left before they did. I only know about the people from the coffee plantation.

Q. Was there a house for you to stay in?

A. There was no house for us to stay inside. The coffee plantation belonged to French people. It was called coffee plantation, and there was no house, only orchards. We slept in the orchards. In the morning, we were driven away again. We traveled one full day, and got to a village called Daem Kabok village in Kola language; I don't know what the Cambodians called it. The Kabok fruits have seeds which can be eaten. The inside is white. They can be made into oil. These fruits are called *Cham Bak* (tree giving hard wood). There was no village; the place was called Kabok village. We stayed there another night. The next morning, we were driven away again. We left at 9:00 A.M. The third day we got to Khciey village. This village was an old village, because there were mango trees, and jack-fruit trees. Oh, yes, before we got to Khciey village, we got to Sala Kraw first. There were people and soldiers living in Sala Kraw, but we were not allowed to stay there; we were driven to Khciey village. There was a river and



water there, you see. The folks there cut some trees to make shacks, and looked for some *Ach Moan* (chicken's dung) hay to tie together and use as roofs. The shacks were short, just good enough for us to stay. We thought we were going right away to stay somewhere else. They didn't let us go anywhere. We had no hope, so the villagers led one another to cut bamboo to make huts and looking for hays as roofs to cover them. There were no walls. The woods were cut in small patches and we used as pillars. We thought we would only stay there temporarily. Well, we stayed there for awhile. First I only stayed in that village for one month and a half. My husband died in this village, the Khciey village, in this first hut.

Q. What was the cause of his death?

A. He suffered swelling. He said he was exhausted. He never had to be hungry or starved. Then he had nothing to eat. It was more than a month then, and he was also old. Never before had he been hungry or starved. Then when he had nothing to eat, that was it! There was no medicine. We didn't have any medicine for any emergency. He had swelling. There was a person who was generous. He said that he knew of a medicine, when we took it, and emptied our bladder, the swelling was gone. That medicine is really quite effective. When she brought it to him, he took it, and the swelling went down in the morning. But, he could not get up. About two o'clock in the afternoon, he passed away. He did not live very long. It was maybe after one day and one night that he died. Well he had swelling, then he took the medicine; in the morning we saw that the swelling was down; at two pm., he died; but he did not suffer much. My child who is in Australia (now) did not stay with us; this means that she lived in the same village, but stayed in different huts. Later on, the comrades came by. They ordered us to build houses. Each family built a house. We cut bamboo ourselves and built the houses ourselves. A small lot of land was given to each household. We built the houses to live in this time. Then they gave us rations of rice according to the number of people in each family. At that time, my child and my grandchildren who are now living in Australia, all three of them lived in a separate house. My younger brother and his wife and their children lived near by in a separate house. When we got rice, we pounded it. Since we got no mortar using the feet, we used hand mortar. There was only one foot mortar, and we had to wait for our turn. Those who went there first used it. Those who went later must give it up. Then one day just about, well I would say three months, my daughter wanted to go away from that place. I had dysentery. My youngest sister was the shortest of all, you know? She had a family, and they lived next to me: that is first my house, then my brother's house, then my sister's house next. My younger brother was ordered to go plant seedlings in the place called Kamprah, quite far away from where I lived. My younger sister had a child. She was sick. My child who lives in Australia, came and persuaded me to flee the place for Thailand so that we might escape misery. At the time, we still had gold and silver to exchange for



food. My child thought strangers could help us. I said that I could not go, since I had dysentery. My child called a doctor to give me a shot and got well. But, I could not leave my other two siblings. I said: "Child, go ahead and leave. I felt sorry for your aunts and uncles. We should all go together". If we leave and they catch us, they will kill us. I didn't feel like going. That night, they fled, and I was the only one who stayed behind. After they fled, the Khmer Rouge moved us. They knew that my family fled, you see, and my family did really escape. They sent us on again this time. Let's see, for three months, from June, July, and until August, it rained already, and there was mud, we stayed around. After this, they moved us again to a place called Tik Krey, you know, it was such a hardship. Before we got to that place, we traveled through mud, and more mud, and rice fields. I had sores; I never had sores before. It was itchy and I scratched. Later on, it got infected, because I walked in the mud. You know, we got cuts from bamboo along the way. When we got to the place, the river was flooded. A person took us in a rowing boat across the river. They let us stay in a hall first. We did not have huts yet. We all stayed together. There were people who got there first, and those who got there later. We were quite hungry, you know! I was so hungry that one day I saw buffalo skin. In our country we never ate buffalo skin. I have never heard anybody eat it. How did people prepare it? They roast it. I saw a friend of mine, and I said: "Chay, please give me a couple of pieces, I am very hungry". She did not give any to me. She was selfish. We were quite good friends. First I (thought) she was teasing me. I said: "Chay please share a couple of pieces with me, please, I am very hungry, I am starving to death". She said "Why would a rich person eat buffalo skin? I said "I don't have anything; I came empty handed like you; I have nothing". She did not give me anything, you see. There was a person name Mong You who gave me a couple of pieces. I took them and scrubbed them to be boiled. I had nothing to eat for three days. We were told to go and chop woods to build huts. I was starved, my sister, you see, so starved that I ate *Toal* (a kind of plant), which is irritating to the skin. I also ate bamboo shoots. Later on my foot got infected; this went on for a year. I bore this infection for over a year. There was no medicine. I put everything on it before it healed. While we lived there, they gave us rice rations. They made the children do vegetable gardening. Almost all of my children got big sores, except for my little boy; my older daughter also got some sores. But my sores were the most serious. I built a hut to stay with my family. They gave no materials. We all stayed next to one another; the Cambodians, the Kolas, and the Chinese all stayed together. We all said we were Cambodians. They didn't know who was who. First they gave us rice. They made us go to the Sala Kraw and get rice either once a week or once a month. It was not near you know!

Q. How far is your residence to the Sala Kraw?

A. The people said that just from Khciey village to Sala Kraw alone it is already



more than 30 km. But, from Sleuk Krey village to Khciey village, it must have been more than 30 km.; well it might be almost 70 km. The people who went there had to sleep there. Then, each one of them could not carry much rice on his shoulders. After we got unprocessed rice, we had to pound it, and made porridge. Rice went very quickly, and when it was gone, we had nothing to eat. After we stayed there for a few months, the rice was used up. When we went to another place, it was just about time for the harvest. We helped the people harvest and they gave us some rice; for example, each family got 2-3 cans of rice for one week. We could only make porridge. But we had things with us. We had gold with us, so we exchanged the gold for food. We had earrings, rings, necklaces to exchange for food. First one (1) chi of gold could be exchanged for one bushel (15 kgs.) of rice in the village. But in this new village, I could not do that. I had to pay one damleung (10 chis) for one bushel of rice. My sister, you see, after exchanging gold for rice for so long, I had nothing left. I used up all my jewelry which I had with me ever since I was in Sleuk Krey village.

- Q. Could you exchange one damleung of gold for one bushel of unprocessed or processed rice?
- A. At that time, it was for processed rice. When I stayed in Sleuk Krey village, one damleung could be exchanged for one bushel of rice. But later on, one damleung could be exchanged for only 14 cans of rice. I used up all my jewelry. I had nothing left. I stayed there for quite awhile. After awhile, they sent us away again. Well it was like this. If someone fled the new place, for there were those who fled; some fled to Thailand, by a family or two; then they would send us to another place. I could not flee like everybody, so they sent me to Kamprang village. But before I went to Kamprang village, I changed from my village to another one about one km. away, close by. Some villagers were sent to Kamprang village about 30 km. away. Thus, I lived there alone. All my children were gone. My oldest daughter remained with me. I was waiting for my nephew to bring me some rice, but, he did not show up. I was waiting for my younger sister's child to bring some rice, but nothing happened. I was starving to death. That day, my oldest daughter said: "Mother, today, I will take a chance on walking to Kamprang in case I might meet some old friends along the way, and get some rice to eat". Then, my daughter left that morning and she got lost. She went another way and met the military personnel. But these people did not mistreat her really. They asked her "Hey, comrade, where are you going?" She said: "I am going to Kamprang". "What are you going there for?" "I went to look for some rice for my mother. She is sick. She had a big sore and cannot walk. My mother and I have no rice". The person said: "My niece, you are going the wrong way. This is not the way to Kamprang. This way will lead you to a dense forest and you will get lost, go back home." My daughter cried, and came back home. I was waiting, hoping that someone would come. After a long while, at



about 6:00 pm, my daughter cried and said: "Mother, we will starve to death; I could not find the way to Kamprang. I met with some military personnel and one of them told me that I went the wrong way. He told me to come back. He pointed the way to me". We had nothing to eat. We stayed there another night. The next day I saw my younger brother, the one who later died in the Dangrek mountain range. He brought some rice they had given to the people. They had rationed three cans of rice per family. He got one can which he gave to me. I had that rice to make porridge to share between mother and daughter. Well you see, our names were smeared. I told my brother that if he did not take me to stay at a town where there were some people living there, I would starve. He told me to bear it for awhile, and that the next day he will tell Pak Ky to come and fetch me. I stayed there one more night. The next day Pak Ky and my brother Sok Eng came. Pak Ky had some rice which he had saved from his portion. He gave it to me. We made rice to eat till we were full. They brought beef and buffalo meat too. I have never eaten buffalo meat. At the time, nothing was spared. I ate grilled buffalo meat which was already cooked. They tore a rice bag into two and made it into a hammock to carry me. Pak Ky also had a big sore. After carrying me for about a couple of meters, they had to stop. Oh sister, it was 30 km away, so we got to Kamprang late in the evening. When we got to Kamprang we stayed in a hall. There were hundreds of people around there, so we could only stay for about two days. They made us chop wood to build a hut again. All the people chopped bamboo to build huts again. That place had no straw. It was a bamboo forest. Luckily, it was not a rainy season. We picked twigs to build a fire to warm us day and night because it was a cool season. In my family, the only people whom the Communists could use to work for them were my three children; my two other daughters and a son were still small. One of my sons went to tend to the cows. Pak Ky had sores on his feet so he could not go to work. We stayed there for months and nothing happened yet. If there were people trying to run away, then the Khmer Rouge would move us again. In that town, I think, in Kamprang, at the beginning, they made us stay near a cemetery where people buried dead bodies. I suspect this because at night I heard wolves howling and I was very scared. We had nothing for our roof or for our walls. We only had something to spread over. If we had some wood or some plastic to use as a roof, we would; we had no hay. We did not stay there too long; we only stayed for 6 months. They sent us back to Sleik Krey town, where I had stayed before, only in another place. My sores had still not healed and had got bigger. In Kamprang, my son had a hard time. The children of the comrades who were there before, the old comrades, mistreated my son who was next to the youngest one. My oldest daughter also had a hard time. For the adults, they let us eat rice once a day. For the children, they had them go to the village. Children of the old comrades children chased my children and hit them. I stayed home and saw what happened. I felt sorry for them but I didn't know what to do since I could not walk.



- Q. Why did those children chase and hit your children?
- A. They mistreated my children because they said my children were children of imperialists. However, they didn't know what they were talking about; they called my children names. My children cried everyday; one day, I had the courage to tell the chief of the unit. I told my nephew to go invite the chief to come to my place because I had something to inform him. I told him: "Chief, our life here is miserable. My children can work fine; you don't have to worry about this. When my foot heals, I will also be able to work. At meal time, when they ring the bell to call the people, my children have a bad time. My daughters and sons were chased by the old friends children. If you don't believe him, chief of the group, please look for yourself and see if I am lying to you, sir". He tried to watch for them. Then he told them: "Hey, all of you, what you are doing is not right. You mistreated them by chasing and beating them". Since that day onward they stopped the chase and the beating. A couple of days after the incident, we were moved again. Then we came back to that village again. One day, a doctor came, I didn't know whether it was a doctor or a military man coming to look at my sores. He gave me some medicines which did not heal them. Since I went up and down the stairs, the sores got bigger and bigger. One day, my nephew died. He was my younger sister's child. I heard that he died, but I could not walk. My sister could not come either. She was also sick. I only knew that my nephew died, but I could not go to see him. Our huts were only from there to here, but I could not go. They told me that my nephew died, but I could not walk because of my sore foot. I tried to walk but my foot bled, because the sores were on some veins. I suffered a lot. One day, my former sister-in-law; a cousin, Lin's younger sister came to die in my house. Her husband came and told me: "Sister, I think I will run away". My younger brother fled to Thailand. They will send me away again this time.
- Q. Did he make it?
- A. Yes, he made it, there were three (3) of them: a friend and his younger sister. Whenever there were runaways, they would move the ones who stayed behind. One day the unit chief said that we will have a meeting and that we must go to Srae Ampil. I told him that I could not walk, and for them to go ahead; I would remain behind. He said: "How can you stay, comrade; you have nothing to eat". So I said I could not walk. So the chief, Mr. Chea, told me not to worry, and that someone will bring a cart to get me. The next day, I did not get to use the cart, because they used it to carry things. They said that they had neither a car nor a cart for my personal use right at home. I used a cane for walking, which took me three days to get to the destination. Then my own friends who were evacuated with me mocked me saying something like: "Why don't you stay at the Srae Ampil; why do you come? Why don't you stay in Sleuk Krey village?" I didn't want to go because I could not walk. My own acquaintances mocked at me,



saying: "Gee, how could you get over here too, why didn't you stay in Sleuk Krey village?" I said: "I want to stay in Sleuk Krey village, it is true, because I cannot walk". I was walking with another person behind me also with a sore foot, another person named Suoy who was pregnant and another one suffering from Beriberi disease. We were ordered to go to Dangkor village. We got lost, because we got there last. We met an older man. Fortunately he used to live in my town. He asked us where we were going. I told him we were sent to Ampil village, but we didn't really know where it is. We came after everyone else got there, and knew we were lost. He told us to follow a road which will lead us to the militia who might give us food to eat. We got there at about 9:00 p.m. and met the old comrades and the militia. It was a farming place. It was a good thing it was a farming place. So we begged them for some rice. I told the people there I had walked for three (3) days. I could not walk. We lost our way. Then they gave us each a can of rice for each group, so we were quite happy. There were 6 or 7 of us. I didn't know whether to make rice or porridge. If I made a can of rice for each person, it may not be enough to fill us up. I decided to make a *babar chhmoel*, a "male porridge", a very thick porridge. If I make this porridge, I had to borrow a big pot from somebody. When we made this porridge, we tasted it before it was completely done by slurping the liquid. Oh, sister, you know, one big pot full of porridge was almost gone. Among 7 of us, each one got quite a big portion of the porridge. We finished it all up; we also ate granular salt. The next morning we begged for some more rice. They said: "Well, yesterday, we gave each one of you a can of rice, what happened to it?" We told them we used it all up. They said: "Why didn't you save some of it? We told them we thought that they gave us the portion just for one time. They replied: "Gee, whoever has heard of anybody giving a can of rice to each person? We will not give it to you anymore. There is no more rice left, can you not see that?" Well, we had no hope, so we continued on our journey. We followed those who built dams. It was a rainy season. We slipped and fell as we walked along. We got to within about 7 km. away from that place, called Srae Ampil Pram Daem village, we could see the destination in a distance, and we entered the Ampil Pram Daem boundary. This place is called Tik Khiev (blue water). I was scared of leeches. We had to walk across rice fields which had not yet been planted with rice seedlings. When we got there, my aunt said: "Nang come over here; we are going to Tik Khiev". I told her that I was going to Tik Khiev to look for a younger sibling of mine. When I got to Srae Ampil village, they made me go and speak to the chief unit. The unit was called Ta Song unit. We were all sent to this unit. They made rice for us and we had plenty to eat. You know, I was so hungry that food stuck to my throat. I almost had a heartburn. At about 9:00 p.m. I still had some swelling. After two days, the unit chief's wife asked us why we did not go harvest the rice. She told us that the place was not a clinic, and that we weren't allowed to stay there without doing anything. Suoy (who was then pregnant) and I begged her: "Orn, please have pity on us; you see, I have some swelling, and this girl is pregnant;



how can we go and harvest?" She told us: "You must go and harvest at all cost. Now, I give you three days to rest". We stayed there for three days. They gave us some scythes. Well, talking about harvesting rice; sister, it was beyond any imagination! Harvesting rice started like this \_\_\_\_ and going like that \_\_\_\_ right? Well, I had never done it. They called me all kinds of bad names because I harvested the rice leaning on a cane. I put tobacco in my brother's briefcase. The old comrades called me names saying: "You brought a cane to work?" I told them I could not walk. When I walked without the cane, I fell off a bridge. The bridge was this small \_\_\_\_\_. After I fell, then they believed me. I could hardly walk. When I harvested, usually people handle the scythe this way \_\_\_\_\_. I had never been taught how to handle it. So when I did, the comrades called me names. It was the unit chief, Song's wife who said: "Nang, how can you be so dumb! Why don't you imitate other people; why are you so afraid of dying? We cut the rice outward; we grab the stalks this way." Later on, I was doing it expertly. I said: "I am very sorry. It is true I didn't look. Please forgive me". She said: "Now, watch some people do it first, grandma". I watched them, and this time I knew. I then took the scythe and grabbed the rice stalks and began to harvest. She told me to do a neat job. Well, when she said a neat job, O.K. I'll do a neat job. Some people were fast and they left some stalks behind. So I waited to gather the leftover stalks. She called me names again for doing that. She said that I was too slow. She said she was not talking about just one day; she was just generalizing it. But when I was fast, those who finished were gone, and she called me names again saying that I left behind a chump of rice, which wasn't all that much, you see! Plus, it didn't have any rice on it either. Gee, whatever I did, wasn't right. I cried, and I told her that she was mistreating me, and told her to look around and see who harvested any neater than I did; and when I was slow, she said I was slow; everything I did was wrong. She told me to tie the stalks. People piled them up in mounds, and the Khmer Rouge had me tie the stalks. Sister, I had swelling how could I lift the stalks, and do as other people, turning around in a certain fashion, I could not do it. They then taught me how to do it; well, they took the other end of the stalks and put them somehow I don't know how. I sat on my hunches, and they called me names again saying: "That old lady, does she want to die, that is why she works that way? Don't you see how other people do it?" I said: "I have no energy. Whatever I do isn't right. I don't know what to do!" One day I thought: that old lady hated me the most. I had no quality; and I am always sick, what can I do? One day she was sitting, and she let us rest for half an hour before going home. I caught some lice on her head. Since that day on, I didn't have much difficulty. She lessened the work load for me. But later on, they took me away from this unit. I was sent to Ta Laor unit instead; this unit was full of widowed women and the elderly. The unit was comprised of widows and the elderly. Also, those who could not work stayed at Ta Laor unit. The unit was big, and they needed people with energy. After only a short stay there, they sent me to work in Tik Khiev (blue water), you know, the place which I saw once



before, and which I told you too. We could do vegetable and fruit gardening there; this is a place for the Second Unit. The First Unit works on rice fields, the Second Unit works on vegetable gardens. I went to work with other people. At this time, the swelling were gone. I stayed at Srae Ampil longer than any other place. I went to do vegetable gardening everyday with other people. I saw some bamboo shoots. How could I go and pick them up like other people? I had no shoes to wear, Sister! The bamboo shoots were long; I only saw their tops, and I could only break this much \_\_\_\_\_. I never had a chance to look for mushrooms or other vegetables like everyone else. They separated my children from me and sent them to stay at the children's camps, all four of them. They built a hut for three widows to stay together. I stayed with the other three widows, one of them was Porm, myself and the other one Meak Chinh. There was only half a roof; the other half had no roof, and when it rained we all got wet. Some people were good at building things and they could build the huts themselves. But all three of us were widows. When it rained and our blankets got wet, we dried them in the fire, and the Khmer rouge people called us names. They said we were lazy and didn't want to go to work. Sometimes, we told them we wanted to have some time off work, so we could dry our blankets, and they said no, that we must go to work. We went with difficulty. One day, my sores had healed. Thanks to tobacco; you know the smoking tobacco, the strong kind? Sister, do you know about *Sambuor* fruits? They are sour. People used the dried ones, and we ate their young leaves, you know? My sores healed, thanks to these fruits, while I stayed at the Ampil Pram Daem (Five Tamarind Trees). There was a Cambodian, some Kolas, and some Chinese people who told me to try them if everything else failed. They told me to take tobacco and dry roast it. Then pound it into a fine powder. Then roast the dry *Sambour* fruits. Then boil them with Tamarin leaves. Then with this mixture, add some salt and steam them as for a steaming spa. I steamed my foot, then I washed away the pus, then I sprinkled the dry mixture on the sores. After three days of treatment, the sores healed as predicted. They healed because of this mixture! When my sores were healed, then they made me go to work. At night, I went to pile up dirt to make a small lake; I also worked during the day time. I worked like this for years. In 1978, one day I had some swelling again because there was not enough rice to eat. At that time, we ate in cooperatives. For three months, they only gave us bamboo shoots to eat. I began to have some swelling again. I could not go to work, and the unit chief almost killed me. His name was Chen. But later on, unit chief Chen was killed himself. One day, I could not go to work. He came to my place and scolded me: "Why don't you go to work?" I said: "Brother, I can't go to work. I cannot walk. I have some swelling!" He said: "If you have some swelling, why don't you go get some medicine?" I said: "I went to ask for some medicine (herbs). I have some herbs for boiling". Later on, the swelling went down, but I was weak. I could hardly walk, could you believe it? The other two widows who lived with me had their children. Mine stayed at the Children Unit. Their children went to do vegetable gardening. They



picked some vegetables and brought some home and gave me some. From the two women, I got quite a bit. The unit chief came and said: "Sister, you cannot go anywhere, but you picked vegetables". I said: "Brother, it is not true. These vegetables belong to other people; they are not mine". He did not believe me, and he was angry with me. He searched through my belongings in case I stole some rice to make food. I told him to go ahead and search. I had nothing at all because I could not go anywhere. At night, they called the villagers for a meeting. They held a meeting and when it was finished, they held another one. They said: "There is a woman on the west side. She pretends to be sick, saying she cannot walk. Yet, she picks vegetables every day". There was an older woman named Teng, and another one named Say. Say sat next to me, she asked me whom they were referring to. Who is the person living on the west side? I said: "Sister Teg, they probably meant me". They said that: "Actually, her skin is pink like a catfish's skin". The people at the meeting were wondering who in the world was the person with the pink skin like a catfish's skin and living on the west side. I then told sister Teng: "Sister, I think they meant me". Old lady Teng said: "Excuse me, may I please interrupt you? Can I please speak? Brother Cheu, you are wrong. If you suspect Nang, you are wrong. Nang lived next to my hut. She can hardly walk, it is true. Please forgive me, but even having a bowel movement, she had to do in a can and had to have her child dump it outside; she cannot walk". Chen said: "She picked vegetables every day". Soy said that the two other widows who stayed with me picked the vegetables, not me. They picked them and kept them for later usage, and gave her some. Chen asked me "Tomorrow, can you come and dry *Kak* (kind of plant for making mats). I said: "Child, my daughter has some swelling too. I have some herbs which I got from the folk doctor"; they were roots, called *Cham Naing*. "I have to boil them." The unit chief said: "Gee, it is late, and you still have not come down from your hut. You are busy making food. I told him "I am not making food. I am boiling medicinal herbs. They are boiled now; I am taking them down now". He was very furious with me. He said: "Do you want to die or to live?" I held my child crying all the while. I followed behind him. He went to call on me to dry *Kak*, the kind used for making mats. After a while, a woman unit chief saw me and said: "Old lady Nang can walk to the food hall today, go to work, go to the vegetable garden". I said: "Sister, I cannot get there". She said: "How can you say you can't get there? If you can eat, you can work too". She scolded me. I cried so many times you can't begin to count them all. Then I told her that Chief Chen told me to dry *Kak*.

Q. How many people are there in each camp?

A. Oh, I would say there were hundreds of them. There were many units in town, such as Ta Som Unit, Ta Laor Unit, my unit, and Ta Sien, my sister's unit, and others to make 5 or 6 units. In each unit, I would say there were 80 or 100 people.



I would say there were about at least 700 or 800 people in a town. There were a lot of people, not few. After that, I had to go to a hospital. I could not stand any longer. At the hospital, the militia men went to see me, and found that I was really weak. They let me rest for a month. After the three month rest, I went to work. I went to clear the jungle like other people would do ordinarily. I had to endure the job. Normally, in the town where I lived, there was plenty of rice. But when the harvest time came, we only received two ladles of rice each. When they put rice in the shacks, we would get porridge again. We never had enough rice to eat. Later on, I went to work with other people, sometimes at night too. Sometimes people dug to make small lakes, and sometimes they built dams; we worked day and night.

Q. Until what time did they make you work?

A. They made us work two hours at night: from 8:00 p.m. till 10:00 p.m.

Q. Did they have any kind of light?

A. They had some light, some Kerosene lamps. They did not lack anything in commodities. I could pile up dirt to stop water from overflowing the dikes; but they didn't make me work on the ground. I only had to take the small carrying baskets from other people; we made a relay. The dirt-filled baskets went from one person to the next and then I would pour out the dirt. Those who chopped the dirt went on chopping it. We were older, so they didn't make us do this, only the younger ones. We all went to work, even those with children. There was nobody who didn't have to work. In 1978, there was a fright: I saw the Khmer Rouge abduct some people, those who made mistakes. But I never watched them kill people. I only knew that they abducted my younger sibling; I saw that. They killed her. Their regulation was strict. One day, Phum, a young girl, from Bar Pailin, went with a military man. He was married. She knew he had a wife but still went with him. They took her away and killed her. My younger sibling say it; I didn't dare go look at the scene. Then there was another person named Duon.

Q. Did the military man force her to do it?

A. The military man did not force her. I heard that the man divorced his wife. Their regulation did not allow anybody to have a divorce. They abducted her, and interrogated her. I went to the place where they had a trial. She lived near my hut. They asked the man: "Do you agree to let go of Phum or stay with her?" Both he and Phum said they would rather die than not live together. Then they killed them. If he had said he would take his wife back, then they would not kill them. They would only kill one person. My God, I heard that they killed them by savage methods. They did not shoot them, you see. They beat them up with tree



trunks. I heard that they were buried while they were still weakly breathing. I got Some people saw this; I didn't dare go to watch it. As for Duon, they also killed her the same way. I never went to see the killing. I only went to the meetings, like everybody else.

Q. Who was the person who dug the ditch?

A. They had the victim dig his/her own ditch. They told the victims to measure the ditch; they had both of them dig. As for Phum, I heard that both she and her man had the same grave. This, I heard from my younger sibling who went to see what happened. My younger sibling was young, and brave. When they tied them and beat them and dragged them, I saw them, both husband and wife. But when they killed them, they didn't do it in front of us, you see? They did it in the forest. I didn't dare go to see that; I was scared. I could go to work with other people. When it comes to harvest the rice, I could do that too, both in the dry and rainy season. I never had a free time. After three months, I checked out of the hospital. When I went home, I had no clothes to wear. I asked the unit chief for them. He was not so mean this time. I told the military personnel that my unit chief was mean. The military personnel came to educate him. I told them that my unit chief was mean, and that he wanted to kill me, saying I was feigning to be sick. The military personnel said: "Oh, just look at you, you are nothing but skin and bones". After I checked out of the hospital, he did not dare mistreat me. When I went to ask for some clothes, he gave some to me casually. Later on, this chief wanted to flee. At the beginning of 1978, this chief wanted to flee to Thailand. They caught him and took him away to be killed.

Life under Pol Pot, as you already know, was such that our children were separated from us. I had four children. When they stayed at the Children's Camps, they stayed together. When they wanted to come visit me once in awhile, they got scolded. The unit Chief, Chen, who was killed, called me names. Every time my children came, he said: "You have your children come here. Do you know that they are not authorized to come and spend nights with their mother". I said: "Please, brother, my children come once in awhile. They worried about me because I am not well. They wanted to come and see how I feel". He said: "While they are here, be careful... they might steal our vegetables... that wouldn't do..." I said: "If my children steal your vegetables, whomever you might catch, please go ahead I kill him/her. I shall have no regret". My children did not steal. All my children, especially my oldest daughter, was given easy work to do. Well, I am talking about work over there. Why do I say she had an easy job? She took care of pigs. They gave her a job, feeding pigs. She had to cut a kind of grass and boil it with bran and fed it to the pigs. Then she got a ration of rice, a portion of rice. After finishing her work, she went to clean up at the kitchen hall. That was all that she had to do, but they gave her two portions of food. She brought a



ration to me, because I could only work part time. I got a small portion, but I got enough, thanks to my daughter. Then my younger son carried rice seedlings in buckets for the people to plant. My second daughter had the hardest time. She had to move the vegetables, such as bamboo shoots or *Trakuon*, and all kinds of vegetables. She had to carry them from one village to the other. She had the hardest time of all her brothers and sisters. I stayed with some widows. They were kind to me even though I did not know them before in the town where we lived. When they saw me they took a pity on me. When they got a gourd, they cut it open and gave me a portion. They did the same when they had some corn and papayas. All these vegetables were stolen. They grew them themselves, and stole them themselves. Even if we grew them inside our own yard, when they came and checked on the vegetables, we had to put them in cooperatives. If we wanted to eat them, we had to keep some in hiding. These widows shared their vegetables with me. They were very kind to me. We lived together for a long time; they had some children, and I had some children too. We stayed together until the Vietnamese invasion.

Q. Did the Khmer Rouge ever beat your family?

A. They have not beaten my family; they only forced my family to work.

Q. Have you had any happiness under Pol Pot regime?

A. Life under Pol Pot never brought any happiness. I never had any kind of happiness, never. I only saw worries, unhappiness and concerns.

Q. Did you ever think that at one time or another they would take your family or a member of your family to be killed?

A. Yes, I thought about this matter. I thought about this, yes. I also thought about the day, when we Cambodians (non communists) defeat the (Communists), or when the Thais might come in. I thought about the day when the Khmer Rouge might take us to be killed. I also thought about the time when there would be courageous men coming to save us. I only thought about these two possibilities. Otherwise, I only waited for the day when I would die. Talking about hunger I was hungry all night long, and all day long, until night again. At night, the bed bugs bit me. The mosquitoes also bit me. How could I have enough sleep? Then, the next morning, I had to go to work and I thought this would be the day when I would die. I did not think about running away. I didn't dare to. I was far away from Srae Ampil. I was about 70 km or 80 km away from the Thai border. They moved us to live in an area far away from the border. Srae Ampil is located in Battambang Province, along the stretch to Bar Wel, and beyond this point, going close to Au Chrew; the only thing was that we were about 80 km from the



Thai border.

- Q. The people who were evacuated on April 17, 1975 were called the "New people". Did the new and the old people have the same kind of privileges over food and work?
- A. We, the people of April 17, had no privilege of any kind. This was the reason why when a person of April 17 fell in love with a person belonging to an old order, he/she was at fault, or violated the law. This was one of the privileges which was not distributed equally. As for working, which was performed in front of us, we saw that it was fair, that they worked just as we did. As far as eating was concerned, in front of us, we saw that we ate the same thing. Some people went to peek through their houses, and saw that they made rice and food which were different from what we ate. When we ate together, they gave us one or two ladle of rice equally. But some people saw that at their houses, they had different kinds of food to eat. This was what I heard, but again I didn't have too many opportunities to go out. I only heard rumors. But, I believed these rumors, because their skin and ours were different. They were not skinny. Why was it that they were not skinny when they did the same hard work as we did, and ate the same kind of foods? Obviously, they had good food to eat. If we had gold to exchange for something, whom would we trade it with? We would trade it with the old order people for food.
- Q. What were the new people, and the old people?
- A. They called themselves the "Base", and we were called the new people. The new people were those who were liberated on April 17, 1975. The "Base people were the resistance people, the revolutionary. They went through thick and thin together.
- Q. Did they kill your family or your relatives?
- A. My family was not touched. But there were my cousins who left before we left Bar Pailin. They wanted to flee to the Thai territory. They were caught and killed; they were shot. They were my cousins on my fathers side. This lady cousin and her two daughters were killed. They were killed in Bar Pailin; they had not left Pailin yet.
- Q. At that time, there were many deaths in the camps?
- A. Yes, oh yes, there were many deaths. My husband was not the only one who died. Outside of my family, there were countless deaths. There were many different kinds of diseases; some people died of starvation, some of swelling, some of



diarrhea, some of both diarrhea and vomiting, like cholera, and others of acute under weight condition. Later, they finally died after several years, some 1-2 years, while some others died right away; there were all different cases. There were many deaths, not just in my family alone.

Q. Do you think this was the Communist's goals to kill people or that they did it to get more population into the Communist regime?

A. I don't know about this matter but I know this much -- In 1978, I heard rumors that the Communists ordered to have a big well dug, in my town, the well was dug. In other cities there were some wells too. They said they wanted to get some people to go to meetings. Later on, they killed all the people, except for a few thousand young and beautiful girls, who were kept for the Chinese. That was what I heard. We had not gotten to that stage yet; we left before that stage. If we were not liberated, I think that they would have done just that. It was true that the wells were dug. In my town, the wells were huge. When I was there, I did not know about this. I only heard about this when I got to Battambang. It was like this you told me about this, then, when I look back, it was the same thing. They told us that after we finished digging the well, we will hold a religious ceremony...I used to hear this. I only heard about this when I got to Battambang. Then when I thought about it, I agreed with the people's beliefs.

Q. Why do you think they kept beautiful girls for the Chinese?

A. I don't really know this. I only heard about it. I have no opinion in this matter. I only heard that they probably take the girls to breed with handsome people, or maybe for prizes? I don't really know. I don't understand their plans. I only heard rumors about this.

Q. Do you still remember an event which you cannot forget under the Communist regime?

A. A situation which I never forgot was the day when I went to dry *Kak* (for making mats). I boiled roots for herbal medicines. A Communist came over and saw that and accused me of making food everyday and yet was too lazy to go to work. He went to search in my hut and asked me whether I wanted to die or live! or that I wanted to live like everyone else! This is what I can never forget! My children were also mistreated. In our country, we have never encountered starvation. Then, we were called names, not just for my family alone, mind you, they educated all of us? They said: "If it were not for us to carry out the revolution successfully, and evacuated all of you, if it were not for us to go inside, all of you would have starved and died. If it were not for us, the revolutionary people, to save you, all of you would have died of starvation". This, we cannot forget either.



In our country, we have never faced starvation. We had enough to spend at our will. We never starved, and we are unable to forget this, nor do we forget the way they called us names and scolded us. In reality, they did not help us; in fact they destroyed us.

Q. Did you know any Communist before 1975?

A. I have never known any Communist.

Q. Had any of your neighbors worked for the Communists, but you did not know about this fact before?

A. My family did not know about this at all. My neighbors even wanted to curse the Communists. Each one of us stepped out of our home, leaving behind our belongings.

Q. Well then, the Communists who went to Bar Pailin were not the people from Pailin; is this true?

A. Yes. Those people were not from Bar Pailin.

Q. Have you seen them mistreating your neighbors, your family, or your friends?

A. For my family, yes. It was about my 2nd daughter, Chharun; she was caught a long time ago, I forget when it was. People led one another to go to a big orchard of oranges. The Communists chased them out accusing them of stealing. There were many people, not just one you know. It was the whole village. My daughter and another girl named Eng also went. She was half Chinese. She was not the beauty salon operator. They were beaten with a big whip. Both of them ducked and got their hands whipped until they were swollen. They were called names for being imperialist Americans. They were said to be very bad, and to go around stealing, and robbing. My family got beaten only this one time. Later on, I saw something like this when I went to live in Srae Ampil. Right now the family is still living. It is the Lak Phe family and the Phai San family. When they first came to America, they stayed in Iowa. The wife's name is Say Khim. There are 6 children in the family. They lived not too far from me, only in a different unit. When they first lived in Sleuk Krey village, their son, Pan Char wanted to flee to Thailand. He was caught. There was another man named Pan Ang. Right now his wife lives in France. His wife is not dead. Now she is remarried. He persuaded his wife to flee to Thailand. She told him that she was pregnant. She told me that the Communists forced Say and her to work. She told her husband that she was not going to Thailand. Their child was still young and she was near delivery time. Then, he tried to persuade Lak Phe Phai San's son to flee. They



caught both of them. They let them eat till they were full. Then they asked them about the reason which led them to flee the country. They lied to the Communists that they were not fleeing, and that they only lost their way. The Communists did not believe them and they killed them both at the same time. Later on, they moved us. After the two persons attempted to flee, they moved us to Srae Ampil village. After we were moved, we stayed in units. When they moved us, they moved everybody. Not long after we settled here, about 1978, the small children were about the same size. My two children were still small. They were working in the Children's section. There was a boy named Ang Cheng. His father's name was Wimon Sang, and his mother's name was Suy Yin. There was another boy named Chin Rin. Chin Rin and Ang Cheng were friends. They worked in the same unit. One day, the mobile Children Unit gave small amounts of rice, I guess, I don't really know for sure; Ang Cheng was young therefore, he didn't know how to express himself. He said: "Long live the Revolution, one person one ladle of rice". Just because of this, they took the poor boy away to be killed. First he was not killed. He was taken to the Khum's chief's house to be tied. The Khum's chief (sub-district) and the town's chief beat him up till his teeth fell off. He was also chained. His parents went to see him but did not dare cry. They came back and told us about it. Five days later, he was killed. One person had two children who were also killed.

Q. How old were the children?

A. At that time, in 1978, Ang Cheng and Cheng Rin were about 10 years old. They were my friend's children. Now Cheng Rin arrived in Texas. He got to the U.S. the same year I got here. His family is still in Texas. Later on, Say Khin's child and Ang Teng's child got married. Say Khim and Ang Teng are now related by law through their children. Their children died; it was kind of the same case. I have seen the cases of these two families very clearly.

Q. How did the Communists kill (this child)?

A. They killed by beating. I heard they beat (the victims) up; but I did not see the killing myself. But I have heard that they put the victims in a bag first. Then they were taken away to be beaten. The children knew about this treatment better than I did. The two children knew about this treatment better than I did. The two children were both 10 years old. Well, you see, they were used to being fed properly and contended. When it was not the way it used to be, they just.... said something more than they should... long live the revolution, a ladle of rice, just that much, they took them away to be beaten. The parents did not dare cry. If they did, they would be killed. This much I have seen with my own eyes. At present, the child's parents arrived in the U.S. The other child's parents are in Texas. There were many ways which they used to mistreat the people. For



example, the parents and the children were used to live together. There is another family that went to New Zealand. They also have a child who was killed, not by being beaten up. The parents had the child go to another place to farm. The girl was about 13 years old. She was subjected to such hard labor that when she came back home, she died. After working too hard, the girl got ill and died. Another family was my friend. Well, the family was kind of well, on Mr. In Tam's side (Prince Sihanouk). These people went to Kbal Krabei (buffalo's head) village. They wanted to help the people. There were many people who went along with them (escape). There was once, in 1976, they came near by Srae Ambel where I was sent there last; they came by to take many people out. There was a family... the woman's husband was killed during Pol Pot's regime, like me; he was killed after my husband was. She had many children. Her small child died....lets see...there was a daughter left... Now, there are only two left out of three boys and three girls. One daughter escaped to Thailand; the three boys were caught, and were all killed. The mother almost lost her mind. She now lives in Siem Reap. About the killing, I don't know some of the people whom they killed. These were the people whom I know. There were of course those whom I don't know, but I paid no attention to that, because I don't know them very well. Some people were evacuated from Battambang, but different regions, this is about the people in Bar Pailin whom I all know. I heard that the Khmer Rouge shot the three boys who planned to go to Thailand. The rest of them were beaten. People said they used the *Sangker* (kind of plant) branch. My younger sibling used to see them kill people. They used the *Sangker* branch. I have never seen the scene. I only heard people talk about it. Then there was another family. The wife is now in California. They lived in my village, Bar Yakha. I lived in Khciey area, and they lived in Changho Veng. Her husband was killed. Later on, she married her brother-in-law, after her older sister died. She still has older children living. One day, her husband's child fled to Thailand. He/she already made the escape, but the parents did not know about it. They went to report to the Khum's chief (sub-district) that their child was missing. Another person also reported about his missing child. The Khum's chief said that if they were missing, let it be. Two or three days later he did not say anything about it; he did not scold the parents. Two or three days later, there were rumors that the father and his son, Nerin.... well, let's say that Nerin is still living in California, now, he was the one who fled; well, he had his older brother, Liem, and his father go in a cart to get rice. They disappeared. They were killed, but I don't know why or by what means. Some people saw the bodies, but we do not know how they were killed. Some people said that the Khmer Rouge killed the two persons. There were the bodies of the father of the boy who fled to Thailand, and his friend. He fled, and he told me that he was suffering until he got to Thailand. He met me in Siem Reap and told me about his plight. Right now, he is still single, and lives in California. His mother is still alive, and his aunt's child is also alive. The boy who fled and the deceased's wife now live in California. The Khmer Rouge killed many more



people, but I don't know about it. I don't know about those who came from Battambang, Phnom Penh (capital), and other cities; I only heard their names, and I only knew about those who were from my village. Beside these people, I cannot tell you since I don't know them very well, but there were many of them. There were some whom I only heard about, but have not seen them killed. There was a man, a Cham, a Muslim, named Sman, and Doctor Kong Saing. The Khmer Rouge took them both away to be killed. Sman was a wealthy man, a manager. Dr. Kong Saing was a doctor. They said they transferred them to another place, but actually, they killed the two men. Their plan was that if they wanted to kill someone, they said they transferred the persons to this place, or that place, but in reality, they killed them. Those who did nothing wrong were really transferred. Sman and Dr. Kong Saing were put in bags and were taken away to be killed. In this case, they just took them in bags and killed them, just like that. They did not have to transfer these two men.

Q. After they killed someone, did they give the bodies to the family?

A. These people (Khmer Rouge) never gave the bodies to the family. Those who saw the bodies must remain quiet. They must not say anything at all.

Q. Those who were put in bags, were they buried alive?

A. They never buried them. When the victims violated their laws, they were ordered to dig (their own graves), for example: how tall, and big the victims are, to dig accordingly. Then they beat them up and pushed them in. For those people whom I told you about who were beaten, they were beaten to death, and not buried. For example, a man had relations with an "old order person", he was a military man. He took Phum as his wife. Another man called Chuon, raped the "New Women". He was ordered to dig his own grave. Aside from these kinds of victims, they were beaten to death and abandoned. Some were not smelling bad or swollen yet, and were seen by passers by. They were abandoned till they rotted, or dragged by wolves to be eaten. People were whispering about these killings. Well, you see, the people were missing, and other people saw them (dead) with their own eyes. This is all I know. They killed many people, but I don't know them. Further more, I forget their names. I remember those whom I knew, like Dr. Kong Saing, he was the main doctor in Bar Pailin. We used to go to him for injections, I knew him. I could tell you about those people whom I knew. When I haven't seen the people's face, and only heard about them, they were erased from my mind, I don't remember who was who. I only know there were many people. They even killed their own "old comrades" who violated their laws. They were not spared.



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 4

- Q. Under the communist regime, how did the communists organize the people into working groups? What kind of works did they have to do?
- A. Under the Pol Pot regime, all the people had works and duties to do. They divided the people into categories. The men who were strong, plowed the rice fields in the rainy season, or tended to the cattle, according to the season. In the dry season, they cleared the forests, the gardens, or the bamboos for pillars to build houses for the widows. They were not idle or free. These were the men's jobs. In the women's section, the older women baby sat. For the strongest people, they went to work at the "front line" far from home. They spent most of their sleeping nights at work for weeks and months. They only returned home after one to two months. such as my brother, he was the strongest. He went to work in rice fields, far away from home. The Second Unit, those who were not 60 years old yet, but not younger than 40, about in the 50's, just about when I could work, when I was well, not ill, I was the 2nd Unit, went to work in the gardens growing corn, vegetables, cutting grass, planting seedlings and pulling rice seedlings. During the planting season, we did that. Both men and women planted the seedlings. When it was time for harvesting, only the women did that. I was used to harvesting rice. As for the children group, well I mean the young men and women, they were fully grown, were called the "mobile unit". These children stayed and worked among themselves. But, for the children, mine had to carry the seedlings; my 2nd daughter was in charge of picking crops and vegetables. The Khmer Rouge divided the people up in work groups.
- Q. For the mobile unit, were the men and women living in the same compound?
- A. No. They lived in separate halls. In this matter, they took good care of the young men and women. If they were in love, they got married. They wore blacks and wound the *Kramas* (checkered cloth used for a cushion to carry things on the head, or hanging around the neck) around the heads. They had music and dance according to the Khmer Rouge custom. They married the couple's off. The mobile unit people worked very hard from one town to the next. This is what I know, but I don't know the whole thing. For example, if there was not enough work in their area, then they would go harvesting in another area. In Ampil Pram Daem where I lived in Bar Wel, there were many rice fields left to be harvested. The mobile unit had to go there and help in that area too. They mobilized in groups. If my area needed these people, they would also come to help. The mobile unit worked the hardest of all. From what I know this unit worked the hardest. I know this is true because my nephew (niece?) was in the mobile unit.



- Q. How many months went by before the mobile unit returned from helping the people in neighboring areas?
- A. For example, if they had to harvest, they had to do it until they finished the job. I don't really know how long they needed them to harvest. I only know that, whenever they finished the harvest, the unit's Chief brought them back to the village. They all had unit Chiefs, group leaders, the leader of whatever... I can't seem to keep up with it. I know that in my side, there was a unit Chief, a group leader and a small group leader. A unit is largest. The group leader controlled 10 people, and a small group leader controlled three people. On my side, the unit Chief was always an old order comrade, a base person. If it were elderly ladies who worked outside the house, they didn't have to care for children. As for the elder gentlemen, they made mats, baskets, winding strings for the nets.
- Q. Were there any schools in Pol Pot's regime?
- A. There were no schools, nor markets, nor money, nor enough medicines. There was a lack of foods and clothing. This was the way they organized their work. At 6 o'clock, they rang the bell, and we had to leave our huts; they called this "to put a direction". I had a hard time learning their language. They said they put a direction for us. For example, I put a direction on a group of people to go do vegetable gardening. My group's leader took my group to a garden at 6 o'clock. The group that had to go to the farms would go there. At 6 o'clock, we must leave our huts. We must go according to a scheduled time even when we went to chop woods. We should leave whenever we heard the bell ring ding, dong.... At 6 o'clock, we must leave our huts, and go to work. At about 10:30 a.m., they let us rest once. We rested for about 15 minutes. We worked until 12:00 noon, then we went to eat lunch. At 1:00 p.m. we went back to work until 5:00 p.m., then we went home. As for the way we ate food, well, for those who worked in the forests, they remained in the forest and ate there; for those of us who worked and came home, when they rang the bell at 10:00 p.m., each one of us had to have a plate and a spoon. They gave us a ration of porridge and salt at a hole called a dining hall. They made us eat in the hall. We were not allowed to eat at home. We got one or two ladles of porridge with granulated salt. We ate in that hall. The bell was a sign of eating time, and we must go to the hall. For those who worked in the village, they ate at 10:00 a.m. one time, and at 6:00 p.m. one more; they ate twice. In the dining halls, they took bamboos and made tables and benches on each side of the tables. Ten people could sit at one table. They put the porridge in a bowl and a ladle for 10 people. We had to eat there, and we were not allowed to eat anywhere else. In a year, we got to eat rice for about three months during the harvest season. Each of us got two ladles of rice. Outside of this season, we only ate porridge. During the rainy season, we couldn't even get uncooked rice. We had porridge mixed with corn, sweet potatoes, or bamboo shoots, or other



vegetables. As for meats and fish, we had these once in awhile. They had some people go look for them, but they could not find much. They use Trakuon (kind of vegetable) in a soup, and they told us they put fish in it but we didn't see any fish, and we could not say anything. Once in awhile, they had a party. They killed a cow and divided the meat between several units. We each got a small piece. They held this party once a year. I got to go to the party too. One time, they told us they made beef soup, and they gave each of us a bowl; one time we made rice cakes with pork. At the meeting, they told us they would give each one of us a can and a half of rice to make them. But when we got the rice, we only got a pack of rice this long.... each. Well, that was one time. I stayed at that place for years; one time they made a kind of rice pudding, and another time, rice noodles. There were a whole lot of noodles, but we did not have enough sauce to go with it. This is the extra food which I got to have. I have not had any other kind of foods besides these. Each unit received about 10 kg. of beef or less. Some units had about 80 or 100 people. My area was the poorest; it lacked food more than any other areas. As for desserts, or preserved fish paste, we got them; but my areas needed them the most.

- Q. How did you know that the foods in your village were more scarce than in any other village?
- A. Of course I knew. We could not find anything to eat. Whenever we had a meeting, they would say that our town was the poorest. When they gave us salt, we had to pay it back in rice. Therefore, after the harvest, the rice must go into the granges. They had to pay (some people) in rice. We must eat porridge. This is the reason why I knew that our town was the poorest. Once in awhile, we must pay (some people) rice for the clothes.
- Q. Did they give the people Saturday or Sunday off?
- A. No, they did not. Once a month, which they called "end of the month," they said we had a day off, but we did not stay home. They would hold a meeting. We must go to the meeting to listen. Those who stayed home must be ill and must give proof, such as sores, swellings, or showing signs of convulsions, then they allowed these people to go to the hospitals. If they only had a headache or a fever and could not show any proof, then they could not rest at home; they must go to work. For those women who gave birth, they could rest for one month.
- Q. What was the relationship between the husbands, wives and their children?
- A. Well, in terms of work, there was what they called "First Unit". For example, my younger sister,, her husband worked in the village, and she worked in the "front line" (hard work). She was allowed to go home once a month. They allowed the



people to go home in the rainy months, because there were rice fields in the towns. In the dry season, we did not have vegetable gardens in my town. In the countryside, we had to go help other people do gardening in other areas. They could not stay home. They grew sweet potatoes, and corn in those towns a little far from the fields. In Kob, Ampil Pram Daem, there were rice fields, and we could not grow vegetables at all. We could only grow rice. They grew pumpkins and potatoes in Dannak Sala town, about 15 km. from each other. There they grew vegetables. They would not allow us to live there. In the dry season, we did vegetable gardening, and we went to chop the ground. If we need to dig potatoes, we had to do it. The "First Unit" must do whatever needed to be done.

- Q. How many months passed before the children could go home to see their parents?
- A. For the children in that town, they lived in a hall about one km. away from home. Some units were adjacent to it. But we were not allowed to stay with the children and care for them, no. They told us that they could care for them (children), that they had enough doctors, (hospitals). That was what they said, anyway. When the children went to see their parents, and the Khmer Rouge people saw that, they would give them lectures, and call them names, just like in my case. Well, the children, they loved their mothers, and they wanted to come around and draw water for their mothers, and spend one night with them. But when the communists saw this, they would call them names, they would not allow that. They said that we were revolutionary people, we were not allowed to express our feelings of love, regret. The father and the mother must live separately. We must maintain a strong front. They said they were "building something"; I really don't know what it all meant, I don't really remember. They said they did not need people to live together.
- Q. During Pol Pot regime, how was the hygiene? Was there any soap for usage?
- A. When our clothes were not old yet, or it was not time for us to exchange them, well, then we still had some soap left over from the old time. Later on, they gave us black clothes. These clothes were special ones, you see; for the First Unit anyway. But for me, I was old, so I did not get that. I only got a rough kind of material which was supposed to be for skirts, but they made it into a blouse. That was the only time I received a blouse. That blouse was too big for me. It was actually a shirt for men. To them, they only thought about the First Unit people. When I needed a blouse, I went to beg for one, and I got that shirt, just that one time. As for the soap, I never had soap to use. They never gave us anything to use, such as toothpaste, toothbrush, never. We took charcoal to brush our teeth (grind it to a powder). When we had a toothache, they took *Popeel* (a kind of plant), well, its bark which is kind of bitter, to boil and added water three times, we took the final fluid, put in our mouth's and then spit it out. To shampoo our



hair, we took wild *lufo* fruits, the bitter ones, and squeezed them, kind of bubbling to use as shampoo, you know, the kind of winter squash, but the wild kind. We could not eat them; they were used for shampoo.

Q. At that time, how did people eat? Could they eat at home?

A. When I was in Slek Krey town, they gave us rice. Later on, we were in groups; they called this communal eating. We did not eat separately for even one year; it was about six or seven months, we had to go into groups. They gave us rations of porridge or rice. We did not get to cook rice ourselves. When we wanted to, we had to do it illicitly. For example, we exchanged a ring or earrings for two or three cans of rice and cooked the rice illicitly. At that time, we still had pots, and we did not go into groups yet. They took away the pots in 1978. They took all of them; there was none left. They only left utensils to ladle water. When we were sick, really sick, and we could show proofs, like swellings, we could make a proposal to borrow a pot to boil herbs and roots. If we didn't want to give the spoons, we had to hide them too. We hid the spoons. They did not want us to have them. They said they did not want us to have any possession. Because we were revolutionary people, we had to have no possessions. We must sacrifice everything.

Q. Did the women have their own personal bathroom during that time?

A. There was no personal bathroom. When we took a bath, whoever was there could see everything. If there was a river, we would bathe in the open.

Q. Did you have toilets?

A. They had no toilets. For our own personal huts, we dug our own toilets, just like in the countryside.

Q. For the husbands and their wives, did they have their own rooms so they could make love?

A. I don't really know that. Some couples might have their own rooms, I guess. When they were husbands, and wives, they had partitions. I don't know about their personal business. We really did not have a chance to meet one another. For husbands and wives, sometimes they met one another once every month or longer, and some other times, even months.

Q. What kind of foods did they give to the people?

A. Well, for the food, this is what happened. They provided us with seasonal foods.



In the rainy seasons, there were some fish. They had some people go catch the fish once a month. But in my area, there were only small fish, such as smelts. They made smelt soup with *Trakuon*. We seldom had soup. I usually saw that they used granulated salt. Once in awhile, they used preserved fish in the soup. They took the preserved fish and boiled it to get the stock and divide it among the people. For those who worked in the gardens, they got a small amount of this fluid stock. For those who worked in the villages, they ate in the communes, 10 people at a table and they had salt. They used preserved fish as big as a wrist, and boiled it in a big wok, and divided this clear stock among the people. This is the truth. I don't tell lies. I had never eaten preserved fish and unable to say whether it tasted good, no; I only had clear stock. During the rainy season, we had some pumpkins. They mixed them with green (oriental) honey dos and green pumpkins to make soups in a big wok, then we had something a little tasty to eat, because there was a taste of vegetables. It was just like a soup for pigs. At the time, that tasted good to us. During the rainy season, we were better off. Even if we didn't have fish, at least we had pumpkins, which tasted a little better, with green honey dos, all mixed together, like pigs feed. During those months, that kind of food tasted good for us. In 1978, they took away all the pots; they did not leave any pot for us. They were afraid we might cook food. At the time, they did not let us have any freedom. At that time, those who had gold and silver could not exchange for food either, because there were no pots for cooking. They even took away kettles. If we had kettles, we could still cook something. But when they took away the kettles, even when we had gold or silver, they were of no use to us.

- Q. How was the marriage ceremony during Pol Pot regime? Who were the persons who arranged the marriages?
- A. According to how I understand the process, at that time, women could propose to men. For example, when a woman saw a man and she fell in love with him. She could establish a relation first. The parents did not have to get involved in this matter. The bride and the groom could just decide. When they were in love, they could not do anything compromising. They should contact the Organization which marries them off, and nothing would happen then. In 1976-77, when there was a marriage(s), they killed a pig, and they gave the couples 4-5 cans of rice and some clothes. Later on, they got poorer and poorer, and there was nothing. The most the couples would get, well...you see, at onetime, there were 20 couples. Each couple sat together. The Khmer Rouge would bless them and wish them well. After that, they would beat the drums and dance according to their custom; there was no other ceremony. They danced and sang; I did not know how to sing their songs. They were revolutionary songs. Their songs were those of their own society.
- Q. What kind of clothes did they wear for the wedding?



- A. At that time, they wore black clothes, with red *Kramas* (checkered cloth) around their necks.
- Q. For pregnant women, did they have pre-natal care?
- A. From what I can understand, for the girl who lived next to me, they did nothing for her. She went to work until delivery time. Then, just like I said, after the delivery, she stayed home for one month. After exactly one month, she went to work again. We had to work all the time, unless we were ill and had some proof of this, then we could stay home; if not, we could not stay home.
- Q. Who were the people who took care of the babies when the mothers went to work?
- A. The elderly people babysat.
- Q. When the mothers went to work all day till the evening, what did the babies have to drink?
- A. I don't really know.... Well, it was like this: if a woman had a baby, she did not need to work in the First Unit. She would work in vegetable gardens 3-4 km. away. While the mothers were away, they would boil watery porridge to feed the babies. At this time, there was not much breast feeding either. The mothers did not have any breast milk. From 1975-to 1977, women still menstruated somewhat. Later on, they did not. The same went for single girls; they did not menstruate either. After 1977, single girls did not menstruate anymore. It was very rare that babies would survive. They would survive up to one or two months, then they would die. Under the Pol Pot regime, the babies could not survive. When they were born in their own town and during an earlier time, they were alive, then would die in another era. But to be born under Pol Pot regime; and stay alive, it was pretty rare. I had never seen them being taken care of after four months of age; they all died before that age.
- Q. Did the women have menstruation?
- A. Under Pol Pot regime, the women had no menstruation. If they had menstruation, they would have a hard time. There was no *sampots* (skirts) or blouses. It would be difficult. I asked everybody who said they all did not menstruate. The single girls did not menstruate just like the older women. Therefore, after 1976, and 1977, women did not get pregnant. The menstruation just stopped. For those who got married, they just did it as usual. The next day after the marriage, they went their separate ways to work. They did not get to live together all the same.



- Q. At that time, did they have any ways to prevent different kind of diseases?
- A. According to their own revolutionary ways, they said they had doctors and medicine. But by our standards, we say that they did not. For swellings, they had herbs which they boiled for taking by mouth. For headaches, fever, and diarrhea, there were pills that looked like rabbit's dung. The people in my village called rabbit's dung medicine. I have a feeling they were made with potato starch since they were kind of bland. As for medicine for the stomach, they were black like charcoal and bitter. I don't think they were very good. When we felt better, we went to rest at the hospital for months, then we would feel fine. For us humans, when we rest, we are cured. When we were cured, we were tired, just like when we were not sick, the only thing is that we did not have to work. When our illness was obvious, we went to stay at the hospital. You see, sister, when we stay there long enough, say 2-3 months, why shouldn't we get cured? After that, well, we were still tired. In my opinion, I would say that there was no medicine, none whatsoever.
- Q. At that time, were there any folk doctors?
- A. There were no folk doctor. Nobody had any right over this. They kept a folk doctor for boiled herbs. These doctors were their own people. This means that for us new order folks, we had no right whatsoever, no matter how educated we could be. You see, for those who were educated, they were killed. Therefore, even though one was educated, one did not dare show it. When one was educated, one was fast to die.
- Q. Why did the communists kill the folk doctors?
- A. The communists killed the folk doctors because they were not communists.
- Q. Did the communists have their own doctors?
- A. I don't know about any area that is outside of mine, like Battambang City, or Phnom Penh, whether or not they had surgery facilities. I only know about my own area. But for these Khmer Rouge people, they got sick just like us, and they died just like us. There was no medical facility to help them. Sometimes, when someone was very ill, they took the person to Bar Wil. If they could not get there in time, then the patient would die on the way. A place that was good for medical care was Bar Wil. Beyond this point, there might be some medicines, but I wouldn't know since I have never gone there before.
- Q. By what means did they take patients from one place to another?



A. They took the patients to another place by carrying them on ox carts. If no ox cart was available, the villages carried them to the hospital and the doctors helped them. People said that the clinic in Bar Wil had quite a bit of medicines, but I never went there before. The clinic Bar Wil was about 20 km. from my village. The clinic at that time had nothing special about it. In April, they came to our place and gave us shots. They were wary of cholera. They used coconut juice. I didn't want them to give me a shot. If I didn't let them, I was afraid they might kill me. Therefore, all the people let them give them shots. They injected just below the skin, above the flesh. It was alright, I guess. I was very frightened at first. They used pure coconut juice, or boiled herbs, of white color, which they put in Pepsi bottles. I was frightened, thinking: oh my god, what if I die? What if I had an abscess? They did not inject in the veins or anything like that, but just under the skin and above the flesh. They gave shots to all the people in the villages. Nobody dared say anything. They were afraid to die. They said that, this was their time, and they had to give us injections. They were quite different, you know? They gave us shots just below the skin, above the flesh, no inside the flesh. This made us scared. when they did this, we saw the needles below the skin quite clearly. The liquid made the skin puff up for awhile, because it did not seep through yet, which caused us panic. At that time, there were all kinds of happenings, quite different, you know!

Q. During Pol Pot regime, did they believe in Buddhism?

A. From my observation, they did not believe in anything. They did not believe in religion. They criticized religion very much. In my village, they took people to be killed. My unit chief said: "To pray to Buddha, to pray to cement; to pray to the monks, to pray to the village children". In the Sala village, there were pagodas. Well, that was their own language, you see. For the Buddha status in Sala temples, in Sala village, in the old pagodas, oh, may Buddha forgive me, they broke off the heads, the arms, the legs and put them in the rice fields. They said that Buddha could not help us at all. For these people of that era, they did not believe in the tree spirits or the *Neak Ta* (spirits) either, nor did they believe in Buddhism. They only believed in their party. First, we didn't know about this. I found out in 1978. The communist party held a meeting. since 1975, there was no Buddhism; they didn't allow us to practice Buddhism at all. All the monks had to leave the monkhood. There were many monks in my area, Cambodian and Kola monks, but all of them had to leave the monkhood. If not, there was nobody to offer them food. After that, they had to work. They allowed no religion.

Q. Why was communist philosophy or theory more important than Buddhist philosophy?



- A. I don't really know. I am ignorant about this and didn't understand why they felt that way. Why did they mobilize the whole population to work in the farms. In the old days, there were few farmers, right? Then there was plenty of rice and food. But when millions of people went to do farming, we had nothing to eat, then I could not help but wonder, I didn't know why this was so. They were may be ignorant or crazy. I think at first these people were lazy. When they saw other people get rich from making a living, they were jealous. They tried to educate the ignorant people in return. The lazy people educated the ignorant people, this made both kinds of people bad.
- Q. Were the majority of the communist people poor?
- A. From my observation, I saw that they were really poor; but I heard that the leaders were educated like everybody else, right? But the subordinates who controlled us, like our unit chief and group leader didn't know the alphabet. I didn't know these people. They were not from my town. The Srae Ampil people were strangers to me, so were the SleK Krey villagers, Bar Wil.
- Q. At that time, could you recited the Buddhist scriptures or pray to Buddha?
- A. I only prayed in my mind; I also recite the scriptures in my mind. I didn't dare do it in the open. We could not do that since they worshiped their party which was higher than all of us.
- Q. What kind of means did they use to educate the people so they would love their party?
- A. They explained things to us, but I paid no attention to that. They explained that if it had not been possible for them to evacuate the people to the countryside, the people would have died or starved to death. Therefore, all the Cambodian people should love the communist party. If it were not for the communist people, the general population would have died in the cities or starved to death from lack of foods. But we could not believe that since we were not that ignorant. We just stayed there as though nothing happened because we were afraid of them. Whenever they talked, we did not believe them. We were under their commands and their power. We just knew the truth and held it in our heart. We didn't dare protest. They explained about many theories, but I didn't go to many meetings. When they held meetings, since I didn't know about politics and the (communist) language, I went quietly to my younger sibling's hut and met with other people my own age. Therefore, I do not know much about those meetings. They always have propaganda and educational sessions.
- Q. Did they have different ideas to pass on to the people?



A. The ideas were not different to us. They made us mad. When we heard them, we got angry. They were ignorant and they wanted us to be ignorant like them. It was not like they took us (out of the cities) to feed us, you know. We had never had famine. We had plenty of money to spend, and plenty of foods to eat. Then, they came along and boasted like that. Even when we knew about this, we did not dare protest because we were afraid of them. Once in awhile, I went to their meetings. They held meetings once a month. They let us rest at the end of the month. We must go to their meetings from about after 10:00 a.m. after breakfast. The meetings lasted till dinner time. I usually did not attend the meetings, because I didn't like them. Their theories were repetitious; they had no meaning.

Q. What were the theories of the communist party?

A. There were some theories; but as I have told you, I seldom went to the meetings, and usually skipped them; so I did not understand them.

Q. Did they not mistreat you when you did not attend the meetings?

A. It was alright. It was not my unit. Other units held meetings, usually the youth units. I went across those villages but I didn't go to their meetings. I went once in awhile, because the meetings were the same, this made me reluctant to go. They didn't pay too much attention to us old people; I was sick quite often, and didn't get to work so much. But, the young people could not do this.

Q. At that time, how did they mistreat the people, and why?

A. In our opinion, we said that they mistreated us; but in their opinion, in their propaganda and their education to us, they said that they helped us, trained, and educated us, so we would know how to do our jobs, to be united, to have equality. Their revolution was "great legs forward". First I didn't understand their word: "to build, establish". When I heard it my hair stood on end, I was frightened. They said they held meetings to educate the people. They said that we must learn to sacrifice everything; that parents and the children should not matter to us. We must follow their revolution. Their revolution was progressive. They explained to us that in the 1980's, we will have plenty of clothes and machinery, we will have everything. But now, we must bear it, we were still poor... But I didn't like to listen to their educational talks. some people did not know what else to do but to cheer and smile like everybody else and they yelled "long live the revolution", since they were afraid. But I walked away, I didn't like to listen to those talks. They explained to us that they helped us and took care of us. But in our opinion, we said that they mistreated us, because we used to have money to spend, a house to live in, some land, and everything else. There-fore, it was difficult for us to have to live this way. If it weren't for some possessions we had for exchange, we



- all would have died. Even when we had plenty of possessions, the majority of us still died. I would say that out of three people, two died, and only one lived, in my town.
- Q. Did they rape the women?
- A. No, they didn't. In this case, they were good. They did not rape the women.
- Q. Did they force the people to get married?
- A. At one time, they did not force them to do this. Some people volunteered to get married, because they did not want to join the mobile force which separated them from their parents. They wanted to stay in town, or the village. They agreed to get married. In 1978, they wanted to force the people to get married, but they did not have time to. They brought all the veterans, the disabled veterans, those who went to fight in the war, some losing an arm, some a leg, to a meeting, so they could explain the people about the situation. They said that all those widows must accept husbands chosen by *Angka* (organization). These veterans went on a revolutionary mission, and they defended the country. Now, they were disabled, and we must take care of them since we owe them this duty. One could not violate the *Angka's* regulation. The people were very frightened, but we could not do anything at all. The old order people did get married, among some of them were the medical staffs. The unit chief performed the marriage ceremony for the veterans, but this order did not reach us laymen yet. Some of us did not want to marry the veterans or pledge our love to someone and get married because of *Angka*. Later on, there were widows and widowers who got divorced because they never loved one another. They only got married because they were frightened. But, if we were already married, they would not force us to marry someone else. Anyway, this situation was about to happen, but it did not happen yet. The reason they did not force the new order people was because of the Vietnamese invasion. If it had not been for the invasion, they would have forced the new order people to marry the veterans.
- Q. Who had more power in the communist power, the men or the women?
- A. I think they were equally powerful, except for the military. The military people were better. They were still humane, still had compassion. Wherever they stayed, both old and young military men mostly grew vegetables. Sometimes, older people or younger men would go to them and say, "Older brother, friend, I would like to have a pumpkin, or a gourd, or sugar cane," then they would give them some. The military men were not too bad. Apart from these people, such as the unit chiefs, well, they were all the same, they held much power. The sub-district chief had the power to kill people in his own area.



- Q. Why did the communist mistreat the people?
- A. I don't really know why. I have thought about that; but up to now, I still don't know the reason. I am still wondering about it. For one thing, they are also Cambodians, but they mistreated the Cambodians, even if they were not Cambodians, they were born in Cambodia; they were naturalized Cambodians. They still mistreated pure Cambodian people, regardless of any race whatsoever. I am still wondering even now, because I don't know much about politics. In my opinion, they were either crazy or dumb. I really don't understand them. I think they were new (in communism). I still don't understand them, I really don't.
- Q. In your village, were there women serving the Khmer Rouge?
- A. Yes there were. They were the townspeople. These people totally believed in communism. They were the unit chiefs, the women group leaders who believed in the Khmer Rouge totally. They followed communism. They would explain communism to the people. Whoever did not follow the faith would be dealt with properly.
- Q. Did any woman ever given orders to have someone killed?
- A. I don't think there was anyone at all, unless she was the one who told on someone. The one who gave orders to have someone killed was the sub-district chief. He gave orders to the spies (*Chhlorb*). But those who had the most power were the military men. But when it came to the military men to take someone away to be killed, it would be the sub-district chief or the unit chief. The latter made mistakes too, you see. But, when the new order or old order people were to be killed, the sub-district chief would give orders to the spies to kill them. They were rarely women though, not in my village anyway. The victims were usually men. But the women were sometimes mean and also used abusive language.
- Q. At that time, did men rape the women?
- A. There were not many cases. Well, in this matter, the men were afraid. This is a good thing, you see. When the women met the military men or the old order men, they felt more secure. The military men were in charge of this matter, and this is very good. They did not mistreat the women. There was no rape cases. They said that they did away with this matter more than anything else.
- Q. Have you ever heard of any story about a man raping a woman?
- A. There was no such case in my town. Men were afraid. Ever since Phum died (because of this kind of story), people were afraid.



- Q. Did the Khmer Rouge force the people to get married?
- A. In 1978, people were forced to get married. They forced their own women to marry the disabled. They just began to force their own people first. They did not get to force our own people yet. We were quite lucky, you see, because, we would have married the disabled like (those women) if it had not been for the way they proceeded to do things. This goes for the young people under 40 years old. For people 50 or 60 years old, they were spared. Besides, we had no energy to wait on the disabled. The chores included drawing water for them to bathe, waiting on them to do all the chores... In my town, we were secure because at least there was no rape. They would kill (the culprit); no one was raped.
- Q. For those who were forced to get married, were they eventually divorced?
- A. I don't know about those who were forced to get married because I had already left. I don't know about their own people. I have a feeling that they had divorces, because, well, it could be a single female medic, (how could she marry a disabled communist?). They did this to set examples for the people to follow them. Some people only got married in name only, therefore, they lied, and shielded the Khmer Rouge's eyes by saying, "We are married." The Khmer Rouge did not get a chance to get around to us.
- Q. Have you ever seen the Khmer Rouge arrest the people? How did they do this?
- A. I have seen them tie the people's hands to their backs. Those who were tied with red strings would be killed. Those who were tied with regular strings would be reeducated; these were the regulations in my town.
- Q. How did you know about the meaning of the red strings?
- A. My friends from the old time people told me this. They said that those who were tied with red strings would be killed. When we observed the events, we noticed it was true about the red strings.
- Q. At that time, did you realize that the experience under the (communist) regime would be useful?
- A. No; it had no importance at all. There was only grief, suffering and wishes and prayers that it would be over, or thinking that we would have to die where we were living, or that maybe someone would come over and help us. We thought, could Buddha please relieve us of all the miseries, if we had no karmas, please help us get over this suffering; these were our prayers. In my opinion, I only thought that we... we should think more seriously than they did (communist); we



only saw death. I thought of death more than anything else. I never thought that I would have a chance to come over here at all.

Q In your village, were there women who spread the communist ideology?

A Higher level than village. We had men, women, children and the elderly who did this. The women who spread the communist ideology were usually the unit chief group leaders, or women. In my tribe, there were some military women.

Q Were these military women violent people?

A Yes, sometimes. Sometimes they were even meaner than the men. I did not have much contact with them. I only heard people talk about it. What I heard about them was that they did not go to watch the execution. They were afraid of that. The women of the Pol Pot regime were not afraid of death. When they were ordered to kill, they had to kill the victims. They would beat the victims up; they did not let them go. When they killed the Cambodian children, not the Vietnamese children, they would take the children away and they would kill them. I heard that the women gave orders for the execution, but she did not go to watch. She might be the sub-district chief or the district chief, but she did not go to watch. People did not kill people so much. The women were not the sub-district chiefs, the town chiefs, or the unit chiefs.

Q Did they ever go to watch the women to take him or her away and kill?

A Yes, sometimes. I heard that, that is, he/she was illegally. Well, I heard that the women were not to steal the prisoners, but they did. Their intention was not to steal the prisoners, but they did. They accused him/her of stealing. They took him/her away (he/she was dead) and took him/her to the execution. This happened when I was in the village. The people who were killed did not have to be the ones who stole the prisoners. When they only stole prisoners, they did not have this kind of experience too, but they did. He went with other children to dig for yucca bulbs. He went along with the others, but when they found the yucca bulbs, they killed my younger boy because he did not have the yucca bulbs. The Khmer Rouge were the yucca bulbs. The Khmer Rouge were just the tops; some of them were the roots. I still had sores on my foot, therefore, I



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 5

- Q. In your village, were there women who served the communist ideology?
- A. Under Pol Pot regime, we had men, women, children and the elderly who did this. The women who served the communist ideology were usually the unit chief group leaders, or medics; in my town, there were some military women.
- Q. Were these party women violent (mean)?
- A. Yes, somewhat. Sometimes they were even meaner than the men. I did not have enough chance to witness anything. I only heard people talk about it. What I heard were true in my town, the only thing is that I did not go to watch the (execution) because I was scared of that. The women of the Pol Pot regime were mean, but then they were under someone's command too, they had to kill the people. I heard people say that they usually beat the victims up; they did not shoot the victims. But I heard that they killed the Cambodian children, not the Kola children. Someone ordered the women to take the children away and they killed them. She was not the leader who gave orders for the execution, but she received the orders from someone else who might be the sub-district chief or the town chief. But, in my area, the military people did not kill people so much. The executioners were usually the sub-district chiefs, the town chiefs, or the unit chiefs.
- Q. What mistake did the child make for the women to take him or her away and kill them?
- A. I heard that the child stole something, that is, he/she dug potatoes illegally. Well, the potatoes were all dug up. The child's intention was not to steal the potatoes, but to dig up the left over potatoes. But they accused him/her of stealing. They tied the child up with the *Krama* (checkered cloth) and took him/her to the sub-district chief. He ordered to have him/her killed. This happened when I stayed in Sleik Krey village. Those who were killed did not have to be the ones who were against the communist regime at all. When they only stole potatoes, they would be killed too. My child encountered this kind of experience too, but he was not beaten up, instead he was released. He went with other children to dig potatoes. The Khmer Rouge caught all of them, but later they released him because he had no potatoes. My child went along with the others, but when they searched him, he had no potatoes. They released my younger boy because he did not get any potatoes at all. These potatoes were the yucca bulbs. The Khmer Rouge dug them up, and all that was left were just the tops; some of them were broken. At the time, I was frightened. I still had sores on my foot, therefore, I



had no chance to witness anything like other people did. When I heard that they caught my son, I cried for awhile; then they released him because after searching him over, they found nothing. Whereas the one who had potatoes, was taken away to be killed. The Khmer Rouge people had an easier time than we did, and had more to eat than we did, and got more delicious foods to eat than we did. They had more than enough foods to eat, much more than we did, and they gave us orders. I have heard about them killing people in Sleik Krey village once in awhile. Those who were killed were those who stole vegetables, potatoes, and ran away.

Q. Were there many people who ran away in your village?

A. Oh, there were only a few, but they did not make it. Like I have told you before, one person tried to flee, but was caught and killed, and another child who was killed because he said, "Long live the revolution...two ladles of rice." The older sibling fled when he was in Sleik Krey, and later on, the Khmer Rouge killed the younger sibling in Ampil village. They moved to many places. Talking about the ways how work was divided among us, the women of the party were mean, and were in charge of giving orders for work, but they didn't kill people so much. There was only 1 thing though, that is they were given orders too. But if those women were the unit chief or group leaders, they ranked number one in giving us orders to work. There is a family now living in California; the father and older brother were killed. There is another family now living in France; the husband was killed.

Q. In your village, what ceremony was held when your loved ones passed away?

A. When a person passed away, we must have funeral services for 7 days; this is according to my customs. The body was held for 3 or 7 days for people living in big houses, then it was cremated or buried. For some people, the body was taken in procession to be cremated after being held for three days. But the people still held funeral services for 7 days. The body was held in the house. In my grandmother's case, we held her body for 7 days. But on the 5th day, we held the body outside the house. We made a car-like stand to hold the coffin, and we held the funeral services only the body was not cremated yet. The funeral procession was held on the 6th day, because my grandmother was quite old, so we kept her body longer. When someone died, and we had not cremated the body yet, early in the morning, about 5 or 6 a.m., we put out offerings for Buddha. We made foods for the monks at the temples everyday. At home we invited the guests to come to our house and we offered foods to Buddha. We offered coffee, and Chinese crueller to the guests.

Q. What kind of ceremony was this offering to Buddha?



- A. Offerings to Buddha included: rice, fruits, foods, sweets, beverages, flowers, candles, and many other things, just like what we offer to Buddha every day. We commemorated the souls of the deceased, and we poured water, praying and sending merits (good deeds) to the departed, praying for the departed souls. On the 6th day, we held the most important services. But there was this service... like, in the morning, the guests came to gather around to keep the family company until night time when the family invited the *Acha* (a wise man who can perform religious ceremonies) to recite Buddhist scriptures dealing with philosophic problems (the *Aphik-dharma's*) on the 6th day. On the 6th and 7th day we invited the monks over and offered them foods, to conclude the services on the 7th day.
- Q. Do the children cry when their parents die?
- A. Yes they do. All of them cry very hard until their bodies go limp. some cry very loud, and some cry softly. They were all different. Some cry out loud. As for me, I don't know how to cry so loud. It was not like under Pol Pot. Then we were not allowed to cry at all. When our own child died, we all had the same memorial services, according to our means, for rich people or poor people. The rich people had elaborate services, and the poor ones had small services. But the rites were the same. For the rich, they invited many guests, as for the poor ones, they did not invite so many people that was all.
- Q. How were the services performed on the 6th and 7th day different from those performed on other days?
- A. They were different in a sense that; for example, my village is in Bar Yakha; on the 6th and 7th day, we would invite all the important people whom we know in Bar Pailin whom we know to come over and gather to pour water as a symbol to bless the soul of the deceased. My grandmother was buried on the 6th day; she was not cremated.
- Q. Why were some bodies buried while others were cremated?
- A. I don't really know. I guess later on, the land was scarce, some cremated all the bodies. When my grandmother died, we buried her; there was still some land; there was plenty of land, and in the old days, the Kolas buried their deeds. Later on, people got the lands to grow vegetables and build houses, so the land was getting small. All of us had to cremate our deads, and we could not bring them anymore since there was no more land.
- Q. Where did people bury the bodies?
- A. People buried the bodies in a wooded lot for the dead. We had a big wooded lot



for burying the bodies, not in the perimeter of the temple. If they cremated the bodies, they gather the ashes and put them in a *stupa* (a small pointed jar) in the temple. In my town, people did not bury the bodies in the temple.

Q. Did the people cremate the bodies in the *Meru*, a structure on which to cremate a body or in the temple?

A. We did not cremate the bodies in the *Meru*. We took the bodies out of the *Meru*. The cremation place is somewhere else. In Pailin, there was a place for cremation. In my hometown, Bar Yakha, there was not a cremation place yet. When we cremate the bodies we use woods. We cut woods, put them in a pile, and cremate the bodies.

Q. Do you still remember anybody who passed away, and who still remains in your heart for ever?

A. The person who passed away and who remains in my heart is my younger brother. My younger brother died during our journey through the Dangrek mountains. My brother loved me very much. He was next to my younger sister who was the youngest. I had many brothers and sisters, and there were only three of us left, living together. He did not die under Pol Pot regime, and he died when we escaped (how ironical). I am very sorry because he loved me. I always remember him; I can't forget him.

Q. Did you get to hold a memorial service for him?

A. At that time, I didn't get to hold a memorial service for him. but luckily, things went like this: in three families, one would be sick, and another person would stay to care for him. There was one person whose child was sick, and another person whose uncle is in New Zealand, stayed to care for the child. This uncle had a knife and he used it to cut bamboos into small pieces to make a hoe. My little brother died in a sandy area, otherwise we would not have been able to bury him at all. The area was easy to dig, and we just buried him there.

Q. When your little brother was buried, were you there?

A. At that time, I was with him. The sand was easy to dig. The man had a knife to cut the wood into small and pointed pieces, and we dug the sand and buried the body.

Q. Why did he die?

A. He had a fever because he was exhausted. We had some food, because the Thais



gave some to us, the organization rationed the food for us. After we came down from the Dangrek mountains, some people told us to climb them again, while others said to go down, back and forth. He was a young man and had to carry many things. He also had to get some water and he was exhausted. He had to get the water way down at the bottom. We did not get to the bottom, and he was exhausted.

- Q. Did your brother die right after he had a fever or did something else happen?
- A. He had a fever for 5 days. First, my child had a fever on the day that we were driven to the bottom of the Dangrek mountains. On the 2nd day, my younger daughter had a fever. My younger brother was fine then. He said: "See, I don't have a fever!" If I do, we'll have to look for a coffin! "He was just saying that. He never got sick. When we got to the bottom of the mountains, he died there, at the bottom, you see? He had a fever for only two or three days. He didn't eat anything. When he had the fever, he stopped eating and drinking. He suffered some pains in his body; I didn't know because he didn't tell me. He didn't have the fever too long. On the 5th day, he told me: "Sister, go to a place with some water, I can't walk!" He died that same day, the 5th day.
- Q. At the time, who was the head of the family?
- A. My younger brother was head of the family. After he died, I was head of the family. There was nobody else, that was all there was to it.
- Q. When you fled to Thailand, was your husband dead yet?
- A. My husband died since 1975, after Pol Pot clan drove us out of the city for a month and a half.
- Q. When your brother died, did you get to have a memorial service for him?
- A. No I did not. There was nothing along the way there. All of us were in a hurry to get back inside Cambodia. At the time, we were in the jungle, and we could not do anything.
- Q. According to the customs of your village, how did people hold a memorial service?
- A. In November-December, people held another memorial service, the same as the Cambodian people having a one hundred-day memorial service. But in my village, people did not count the days, they only have the service again in November-December.



- Q. In that case, they did not comply with the one hundred-day memorial service, did they?
- A. They had a service on the first day; they had an elaborate one on the 7th day, and another time, in November-December. They had a big service every November-December (*Asoch* month). Whether it was this *Asoch* or next *Asoch*, it is still *Asoch*. For some people it was a year, for others it was 7 days when they had a big service again. They could not do it after 2-3 days, since it was not 7 days yet. If it would be 7 more days, then they would have another service. If it would be less than 7 days, then they do it next year, and count the month November-December again.
- Q. What was the reason that people only held memorial services in November-December?
- A. I don't really understand that. I only followed the custom. For rich people, they had the service every November-December. The poor people just followed them. It was like the Cambodian people who had memorial service on (Memorial Day) the *Phcum Ben*, and in my town, people do it in November-December.
- Q. Do you have memorial service for your parents every year?
- A. I do it every year, but not an elaborate one though, that is in November-December, according to the Cambodians, it would be the *Phcum Ben*, and for us, the Kolas, we call it the ceremony of pouring water for the deceased, to convey merits for them (my parents) in that month. Sometimes, I invited the monks for meals, and pour the water, for the memory of the dead. Sometimes, poor people brought incenses and candles to take part in the service and by then there would be a lot of people taking part. Sometimes we joined other people, and other times, they joined us. We could not hold services every year, because each time, it costs a lot of money.
- Q. During Pol Pot regime, what did people do when someone died?
- A. At that time, we were not allowed to cry. They told us that once someone died, well, he/she died, and they didn't want us to cry but.... the unit leader gave orders for the villagers to take the body and bury it. First, when I lived in Sleik Krey village the bodies were buried. When I lived in Srae Ampil, the bodies were not buried so much, but were abandoned in the bush, so that they would be dragged to another place. First, they were buried, yes when my husband died, his body was buried according to the custom. We villagers lived all together. Later on, the bodies were not buried too deep underground, and the wolves or wild animals dragged them out.... If there was a dead person in a house, the unit leader would



stop by and helped and ordered the people to take some bamboos and make a kind of bamboo mat and tie it around the body to be buried. Later on, when I lived in Srae Ampil, bodies were not buried so much. As for crying, we were not allowed to cry. But the Khmer Rouge cried even harder when the children or their parents died, they cried even harder; that I saw with my own eyes. In my family, only my husband died. For other people, like when their children died, they didn't dare cry, they cried in secret. I have seen the Khmer Rouge people cry and cry when their own relatives died.

Q. When they caught the people crying what would they do?

A. I don't know. My neighbors didn't dare to cry when their children died. They were not sure what the Khmer Rouge would do, but they didn't dare cry anyway. About the services, well, that was even harder to come by. How could we have anything to hold memorial services when we didn't even have anything to eat at all?

Q. When the communist people's relatives died, did they have any services for them?

A. There was no service. When their parents died, they would cry, and buried the bodies. The next day, they went to work just like the rest of us. They didn't go into mourning.

Q. Why did the communists do that? Why did they abandoned the bodies in wooded lots?

A. I don't know why they abandoned the bodies in wooded lots. I know for sure that they abandoned the bodies in wooded lots because of this incidence concerning the child of a young lady whose husband deserted her. She was pregnant when he left. They did not kill her. When the baby was born, and later died, they said they took the body to be buried. They did not bury the body at all; they abandoned it indeed. The mother saw the diapers. They abandoned the body in Srae Ampil. The wolves dragged the body. We saw clothing all over the lots. I don't know anything about their reasoning; they maybe lazy, you know?

Q. At that time, did they leave the bodies for the people to see?

A. Oh, as soon as someone died, the unit leader was called, and he would take some measures to enlist the help of the villagers to get the body right away. They would not leave the body overnight or half a night, no, unless it was near dawn or late at night. If it happened in the day time or evening, they took the body immediately. It has never remained in the house for one night.



- Q. During the Pol Pot regime, the Khmer Rouge abandoned the bodies in wooded lots. What did the people believe about the souls or the spirits of those people?
- A. According to the Cambodian beliefs, they think that it is difficult for the souls to be reborn. In our customs, we should hold memorial services, and pouring water so that the souls can be born again. If not the souls still love the relatives, and have a hard time going away to be born again. This is what I heard the old folks say. I don't know whether or not this is true. When I talk about this, it is hard to believe. This friend of mine was killed by the Khmer Rouge. His spirit possessed a person. I saw it with my own eyes. When he left my hometown, he went to Sleik Krey. He was the first one to go there. We were very close friends. We lived in the same town, and he planned to be in the same class with me. He was a middle class man. When he got to the town, he did not take off his gold watch. He traded two damlengs of gold for a cow. He then paid other people to slaughter the cow and sold the meat, and asked for one damleng of gold for 4 kg. of beef. Eventually, the Pol Pot clan killed him since he had a lot of gold from trading. For this, his soul is not good. How do we know that it is not good? When he died, his relatives were not in my town. They were in Battambang. I heard that his spirit possessed his older sister, and asked for a relative named Chaay. The spirit said that Chaay was killed in Sleik Krey village, and that someone cut his throat. The relatives did not believe her and had thought that this older sister was playing a hoax. This sister now lives in Boston. She told me about this; we met in Sarin. There, his spirit possessed another Kola, his own mother-in-law. The spirit said that it could not find it's wife and children, but actually, his wife and children were in Thailand, they had fled to Thailand, and it said that it could not find them. The Khmer Rouge killed him at the bamboo dumps. What the spirit said coincided with what his brother said in Battambang. It said that it did not want to go back. It wanted to eat rice noodle soup, and the possessed mother-in-law ate 8 bowls. Chay's (the deceased) mother was older than I was and she lived next door to me. She did not chew betel leaves or smoke cigarettes. But at the time, all of a sudden, she wanted cigarettes. (We know) that Chay smoked and chewed betel leaves; I went to see what happened. I was afraid, but I still wanted to go and see. I did not dare look the mother-in-law right in the face. The spirit said: "Oh, over where I am, I don't get to eat anything; I don't want to go back at all!" The people at the camp begged him: "If you don't go back, your mother-in-law will die; your spirit has possessed a body; it is not your own body." It said that it knew that. Before it could find the mother-in-law, it had a hard time coming. It said it did not know the way, and it had no passport, and people hit it before it could find it's mother-in-law, and relatives. It came and encountered many difficulties, and it did not want to go back because it had enough to eat. People begged it hard before it finally left the body. If the spirit would not leave her, the mother-in-law will die. After the spirit left, she was exhausted. She now lives in Texas. This is the reason why we want to believe that if we don't hold



memorial services, the soul might have difficulty assuming a human shape in another life. For this instance, we assumed that Chay had *Karma* because he killed animals. According to Buddha's *dharma's*, it were *Karmas* and *phal* (merits). When one does good deeds, he/she gets merits, whereas if he/she does bad deeds, he/she will have bad deeds done to him/her. Some people said that when a person had not gathered any merit through religious ceremonies, when she died, he/she will have a hard time. I don't believe in this idea very much. I think that even when a person did a good deed, he/she will still be born again on earth.

Q. Have the communists ever killed by amputating the arms and the legs?

A. When they took the victims away to kill, I didn't really know. I only heard that, in my village they just hit them until they died. In this instance, I only knew that (Chay) just disappeared. Only when his spirit possessed his mother-in-law did he tell us that his throat was cut. When we were in Sleik Krey village, we only knew that he disappeared. We did not know where he went; we were speculating; we only knew he was killed when his spirit possessed a person.

Q. Why is it that the communists did not understand about deceased people's souls?

A. I don't know what their ideas are. I guess these people did not believe in Buddha's *Dharma's* (principles). They did not believe in religion or spirit. They did not believe in anything. They were one of a kind. They had no belief whatsoever. They said that once people were dead, they never returned. They were useless; gathering merits through religious ceremonies were also useless, since they did not believe in either religion or this worldly way, or the *Dharma's*. They thought that live people would be able to build the country. Those who were dead were gone, and they served no purpose at all, only the live people could build the country; this was their way of thinking.

Q. During the communist regime, were the villagers afraid that their bodies wouldn't be buried after they died?

A. I didn't know what the villagers thought, since we were not allowed to gather around to talk about dying or living. We didn't dare talk about anything at all, we were afraid of them. They made us work. They had group leaders and unit leaders to control us. We didn't dare talk about anything at all. Nobody talked about anything at all.

Q. How about you, yourself; were you afraid that your body would be abandoned after you died?

A. I was very frightened, and at that time, I did not want to die at all. Why was I



afraid, I was afraid I would meet with the same fate. We were like animals. When we raise a dog, when it dies, we bury it. When they abandoned the bodies like this, each one of us did not want to die.

Q. Right now, what do you think of memorial services for your husband and younger brother?

A. Well I still miss them. Sometimes when I talk about them, I still cry. I had memorial services for them in Surin camp by pouring holy water. The Cambodians, Kolas, and Lao in the camps all chipped in to offer food to the monks, then we had the ceremony of pouring water, and religious memorial services for our families. There were together 50 of us. This was when we were together (at the camps). I held memorial services for my brother and my husband at that time when I was in Surin camp, in Thailand.

Q. After you arrived in the U.S., have you held any memorial services for your brother and husband?

A. I have not done anything at all. I have been thinking about how unfortunate my brother was. If he were living with me now, he would have an easy time sharing all the joys and pains, he died at the end. I am still thinking about him, and regretting again and again. For my husband, he was old, and he did not feel too well for many years; he suffered old age. As for my brother, he was too young. At the time, he was in the thirties; I am so sorry he was gone.

Q. What do you think about the state of your brother's soul?

A. I would say that my brother....well, a person who is my friend's daughter, in Canada, said that my brother was reincarnated into her child. After we descended Dangrek Mountains, she got pregnant in Siemreap. She said she dreamed that my brother asked her permission to stay with her, then she got pregnant. Now she is in Canada. The child is big now about... I have been in the U.S. for 5 years now, and the child was born before this, in Thailand.

Q. Did the child remember his/her past life?

A. He did not remember it. The mother was just suspecting that he came to be her offspring. She calls me mom. She said; "Mom, I think uncle comes back as my child. I dreamed that he asked me to stay with me, because he liked me. Then I missed my period, and got pregnant. I thought it might be uncle Eng" (my brother's name is Sok Eng) "I thought uncle Eng was reincarnated into my child." Then, when the baby was born, it was a boy (as predicted). When I was in Surin, I bought some clothes for him. I believe her, but I don't know whether it is true or



not. I just believe that, and I do it to be happy that is all.

Q. Have you ever met that child?

A. I met that child in Thailand. This year, during a vacation, I would like to go (see him).

Q. Do you believe that other souls of the deceased people in Cambodia are still undergoing misery at the moment?

A. In my opinion, in the old days, we believed in Buddhist *dharma's*. According to our beliefs and the *Dharma's*, I believe that, even though a person was killed, his merits and Karmas and his past good deeds, merits and charity, would enable him to go to heaven and he could be reincarnated. But if a person committed sinful acts, even if he died in good circumstances, he could go to hell and he can't be reincarnated. I still believe this, even if a person was killed, he can still be reincarnated or go to heaven, because he did a lot of merits and good deeds.

Q. A woman beat a child to death. When this woman died, where did her soul go?

A. In our beliefs, she would go to hell because she killed a person. Originally, the child did not come from a family of thieves. He was just hungry. I (the communists) did not take him away, he would not starve. In his own town, even though poor, he still had enough food to eat. In my opinion, the woman had to go to hell. I have this belief because those people never did any good deeds. We, the villagers, when we caught fish or crabs, we still made merits and gave to charity. These (communists) were zero; I believe they will go to hell. This I believe. This is not true only in Buddhism, but in Christianity in America, people still believe in hell and heaven. Now even though I am converted to Catholicism, I think religions are the same, and I still believe some in Buddhism. I believe that when you do good deeds, you will receive merits, and when you commit sins, you will get bad deeds. Both Buddhism and Catholicism believe in the same principles. I believe in Catholicism. Well just like Christ, he helps us to be good; He went around and gave people advice so they too would be good. I believe that those who committed sinful acts like that woman who killed a child, will go to hell after she died.

Q. During the communist regime, were religion and the monks permitted?

A. There were none. All the monks were forced to leave monkhood. We could find none.

Q. Those people who believed in communism, had they ever lived in a society where



- people believed in Buddhism, or had any religious customs or beliefs?
- A. Some Khmer Rouge used to live the same way we did too, you see, in the old society. But they were educated in a different way and they just followed the (ideology). In my opinion, they were ignorant, they were not educated then, they just followed the path. I think they were not too smart. They were just mean and violent. When they were under the communist control, they were afraid of them; later on, they followed their path and were mean themselves.
- Q. What was the reason behind the communists violence and genocide?
- A. I don't really know. In my opinion, it is hard to find anyone who understands this. The communists said that they killed the enemies! They didn't kill the people! They said they killed the thieves. The ones who were moved were called the "new people" or the group of "April 17". They were the base people themselves.
- Q. Have you heard about the fact that they kept beautiful women and handsome men for the Chinese to marry?
- A. Yes, I have heard about that; that they were kept for the Chinese to marry.
- Q. Have you heard the news about any babies who were dark and ugly being killed?
- A. I did not hear about this news.
- Q. Were most of the communists in your village dark?
- A. Yes, they were mostly dark; but they only loved those who were fair skinned.
- Q. In Cambodia, were men and women who were considered handsome and beautiful fair or dark skinned?
- A. The way I understood it, we loved only fair skinned people. Nobody loved dark skinned people. But we don't know what else we can do since nature created us this way.
- Q. How big were the ditches that the people had to dig?
- A. Oh, in my town, they were huge. The perimeter was bigger than the width of my present house. The depth was about 4 meters.
- Q. How long did it take for them to complete digging the ditch?



- A. Oh, it took a long time. The young people dug it days and nights. My group dug it in the last stage because we were the elderly. The bottom of the ditch was not very even. The top part was big, whereas the bottom part was smaller. Their plan was to have us dig it for one or two years. But I didn't know how long they dug this beforehand. When we went to help them dig it, it was during the last stage.

Interviewer: Yes, sister, we also dug ditches in my town.

Interviewee: Then, people dug ditches everywhere; I thought that we only dug ditches in our town.

Interviewer: Yes, I have asked many people, and they said that in each village, there was a big ditch. Then, in addition to this, I also heard that after thrashing the rice, the communists will hold a big banquet.



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 6

Q. How was your life under the communist regime? What did you do to survive the ordeal and live till the present day?

A. Under Pol Pot regime, my family suffered very much. There was not enough food. First, we still had some gold and silver left over from home and we could use them to exchange for rice to eat. But later on, we ran out of them. Furthermore, the mother, the children, and the relatives lived separately. I was a widow, so I lived by myself. There, two or three widows lived together. Small children and young people lived separately. My nephew Pak Ky also lived separately with the mobile force, he was a young man. After my sores were cured, they considered me an energetic person, and they told me to go to work. I had sores on my feet because when I lived in Khceiy village, they moved me to Sleuk Krey town, and I walked through mud, and my feet were cut with wood splinters. Then I ate bamboo shoots and *Torl* (vegetables), and I guessed they made my cuts infected, and the sores got big. I had no medicine to put on them. I exchanged a lot of gold for medicines, but they did not get better. It took over a year for them to get well. For over a year, I did not get to work because of my feet. During that period of time, we were moved to 4 or 5 different places. Finally, I stayed in Srae Ampil. My child who is now living in Texas did not live with me either. We were separated, and we were suffering and starving. We worked according to the season. During the rainy seasons, they told us to plant rice seedlings. When harvest season arrived, we went to harvest rice. During the dry season, we went to cut wood, and cleared the fields. We worked like men, but we were in force number two, not number one. We worked near our town. When people cleared the land for gardening, we did too. We did everything that people did. When people planted corn and vegetables, we helped them; we cleared the grass, we were never idle. The Khmer Rouge cooked rice and porridge, and gave us one or two ladles. Once in awhile, we had *Prahok*, the preserved fish. We didn't even have enough salt. We picked vegetables (illicitly). My town was agricultural, so we didn't have much vegetables. We had what people called *Kantrung*; I have never seen this kind of vegetable; I only saw it in that town. I took the leaves to boil with salt. Sometimes, I squeezed the water out and I pounded it with salt and chili pepper, with citronella; I used tamarind leaves for the sour taste; then I just dip it in the sour sauce, that was all. You see, I didn't know how to look for fish or meat like some other people. That town had no river. We used water from a pond. During the rainy seasons, the pond was full. When it was dry season, the water went down, and we had to go way down to draw water from the bottom. Once in awhile, when my child was allowed to come visit me, he drew the water for me. He didn't draw it himself since he had nothing to draw it with. He only had kerosene jugs with which he could draw two



jugs full at a time. Since we did not cook ourselves, food was rationed to us. We only used it for boiling medicinal herbs. We did not drink cold water. The medicinal herbs were nothing more than *Phra Khlab*, *Dai Russei* and *Kravanh Cruk* bulbs (pigs cardamon) and the roots of a kind of hay, which we used to avoid swelling. I saw many people get swelling disease. I got swellings myself, and I drank the mixture. I had nothing to eat; I was as bony as a heron.

Q. Did the foods given by the communists include fish and meats?

A. Once in awhile, there were some meats. They had people go catch some fish. They caught tiny fish like *Trey Linh*, etc. They boiled them with *Kantrung* leaves; they had no other leaves but these. That town had no other vegetables except *Kantrung* and *Trakuon*. It was a farm land. In the dry seasons, they sent leafy green vegetables, turnips, etc., from Bavel once a year. Beef and buffalo meats were divided between 6-7 units a year. They boiled these meats for us. We heard there were meats, but we never saw any; we only smelt beef or buffalo flavor. We heard that on such day, our unit got a ration of beef or buffalo, to share with 6 other units, but we never saw the meats.

Q. How many people were there in a unit?

A. My unit was the smallest; it had about 70 people. My brother's unit had 100 people. My town had about 6-7 units. My unit consisted mostly of widows and the elderly. That was the reason why we had the smallest number of people. The amount of food was the least in our unit because we had the least energy. We could not work very much and work quality was bad. Our unit leader considered our group the poorest. We were miserable. Once in awhile, my son caught some farm crabs which he roasted for me. Once in awhile, the Khmer Rouge gave us some soup with fish in it. Luckily for me, my oldest daughter was in the children's mobile force. Her duty was to feed a pig. Each day, she boiled grass for the pig to eat. When she finished her duty, she helped in the kitchen. They gave her two portions (i.e., one for child portion, the other one, for helping in the kitchen). She gave me some food to eat from the kitchen portion. I lived from this arrangement, you see. I didn't know how to look for food. I didn't know what to look for; there were only farm lands; what could I look for? After awhile, I saw some *Trakuon*. I pulled them by the roots. There were no other vegetables. I never had enough to eat.

Q. Was your family mistreated. Was your family ever beaten?

A. My family never had any problem. The communists did not beat my family either. My family never stole anything or grabbed anything since we were afraid to steal. As for work, we were forced to work. At night, my family would dig



ponds to store water in the rainy seasons, so we would have water to drink in the dry seasons. They wanted to have a lot of ponds. Ponds were dug every year. At 8:00 P.M. people went to dig for ponds. They went back home at 10:00 P.M. They woke up again at 6:00 A.M. for work. They dug ponds for two hours every night. The elderly dug them near the villages. The people in Second Unit went to dig in far away places. After the ponds, there were canals. They never ran out of work. There was work to be done every dry and rainy season. They always found work for us to do, such as building dams to stop the water in the canals. In the dry season when there wasn't anything to do, we were told to help transport rice for some people to sow. They always had work for us to do. After this, they put rice in the barns, and we had to cut wood for a change. We would set fire to the land, and then we would take the wood out. We worked through all the seasons. There was work throughout the seasons.

Q. Did the separation from your children make you suffer? How did you suffer?

A. Yes, I was sad. I missed my children very much. I thought I had *Karma*. I could not sleep and I was always thinking, about our home, and I was always sad.

Q. Have you ever thought about the possibility of being starved, killed or tortured?

A. Yes, I was concerned about these possibilities. I could not count on my children. They might be very hungry one day, and steal something. I was afraid they might be caught and killed. When they came to visit me, I always told them: "Dear, even when you have nothing to eat, when we have no more *Karma*, we will certainly pass beyond this misery. Please don't steal anything that belongs to them. Never mind when you have nothing to eat. Don't let them mistreat you. Mother doesn't want to see you suffer, or hear about it either. It is alright that we are separated this way (but not in death)." I always gave them guidance, and my children escaped punishment.

Q. Did you see your children quite often? How many months passed by before you saw your children?

A. I saw my children once a month, at the end of every month. Oh god, as for my brothers and sisters, I had to wait for three months before I could see them. It was such a long time. They lived in different groups. They also worked in hard labor groups. We met about every 3 or 4 months.

Q. Did the Khmer Rouge make you suffer in any other way?

A. No, they did not mistreat me in any other way. They mistreated the people the same way: forced labor, not enough foods, no clothing, no medicine when they



- Q. were sick; this is like mistreating us too, you see? This mistreatment was basic. Another mistreatment was killing when one did something wrong.
- Q. Now that you are in America, did the plight under Pol Pot regime still have any influence on you?
- A. I still feel it once in awhile. I don't want to keep it as a serious grudge. That would only make me sick. It doesn't do us any good. Now we have passed our *Karma* stage. This is enough. I hold no grudges. I don't want to think, dream or remember it any more. But I don't forget about it either. I escape from it this long, it is as though it was only yesterday, or last month; it is so near, so recent. It is still very new. But I don't want to think about it. It only make me have sleepless nights.
- Q. Do you think that your life was scared and wasted by that regime?
- A. I had difficulties because of the communists. In our country, we never had such difficulties before them. We had enough food to eat, and enough money to spend, clothing. Our children had enough too. Then we suffered, and we had a hardship. But now, it is over, we are in the U.S. I want to forget it; I don't want to think about it over again. If I do, it is a long story; I have a big family. Not only my husband died, so did my brother, uncle, aunt, older aunt, cousins, all together 27 people. In this country, we work, and when I think about it, I can't sleep. I don't want to think about it, it is over ow. It happened in the past, and we can't redo it over again. The people who died are gone. If I think about it, it remains fresh. A lot of people in my family died. Three of them were killed by the communists: my cousin on my father's side and his two children. Beside this, they died of illness, starvation, swellings or diarrhea. My close relatives, my older aunt, my uncle, and my aunt, they all died. Now I don't want to think about it; I want to forget about it. When I think about it, I can't sleep. I work in the daytime; but after awhile, I think about it too.
- Q. What have you done that was important which allowed you to stay alive?
- A. In my opinion, in this life, I have done a lot of good deeds. Ever since I was small and poor, until I was big enough, and married, I was well. I have never killed any animal; I did not hate my neighbors. I was in good terms with them, and helped them when they were in need. I made merits and gave to charity, especially I did good deeds which help us. Buddha helps us too. In this country, God helps us. Good deeds follow us everywhere to help us, just like God helps us.
- Q. During the communist regime, have you helped your neighbors physically and morally?



A. When they had a sprained leg or arm, their children hired me to do massage for them. My grandmother knew how to give massage and she taught me that. I helped them that way. When they had a stomach ache at night, I went to help right away to massage them. The town's people like me, and wherever I went, people liked me. This was how I helped them.

Q. During Pol Pot regime, have you ever prayed to Buddha?

A. At that time, I did pray to Buddha. Before going to sleep, I thought of the Three Jewels, Buddha, *Dharma's*, and *Sangha* (monks), and prayed that they help me through dangers, for a quick return to my village. I never thought that I would be coming to the U.S.... I prayed for peace in Cambodia, for a family reunion at home in my village; this was all I thought about. I never thought about having a fortune. I only thought about a reunion with my children, and homeward bound, and braving death. We only prayed in our heart.

Q. Do you remember what else you did which helped you stay alive?

A. I can't recall it. I don't remember what I did to keep alive. Many of those who were my age died, and many of my friends died too. I thought I would not survive. Up to the present, I usually thank Buddha for helping me. When I arrived here, I followed other people's faith, and Christianity, and I thanked God for my arrival in the U.S. Before, we did not know about Christ at all. When I got here, I followed other people's faith and I went to church, and I thanked God. Before my son went to Texas, to tell you the truth, I prayed to God when I went to church. My sponsor told me to pray in Cambodian since I didn't know any English. I prayed for my child to arrive in Texas. One day I said "Child, before you get here mother always prayed; mother thought that our Buddha and their God are the same; they gave us advice to be good. Mother prayed for your arrival". Nowadays, I believe in God. But I still believe in my Buddha. I was raised in Buddhism; I am afraid I would be sinful. I still believe in Buddhism. But I still believe in Christianity, and respect it, and go to church. Now I am a Christian and I believe in Christianity very much and I go to church.

Q. Under Pol Pot regime, did you ever think that one day you would die?

A. Yes, I suspected that I might die. I thought many times that I will undoubtedly die. If I were to die, I believed that I would die of starvation. People don't get sick that often. I suspected I would die of starvation. I didn't think I would die of being killed because I didn't dare steal or oppose them. I did whatever I was told to do. Even if I was bony and weak, I didn't dare oppose them. I always went to work. I was not concerned about being killed. I was concerned about starvation, and wasting away to death; this was what I was concerned about.



Q. Were you afraid of death? Or were you ready for death?

A. I was afraid of dying because my children were small. I was afraid that they would suffer. My brothers and sisters were separated from me, and I didn't have anyone else to look after my children. I was frightened about this at the time.

Q. What did you think about the events that took place at that time?

A. I was very hurt. I was always wondering why was it that we were all the same race. Khmer and the Khmer Rouge moved us around, then made us do the farming like that. I was not the only one who wondered about this. We were whispering and asking one another. We were always wondering why they moved us (to the countryside), leaving our homes and made us do the farming! In the old day, only the farmers did the farming, and we had plenty to eat. Whereas for now the whole population did the farming, but why on earth we had no rice to eat? We always thought about this. We were very hurt. We could not take any revenge either. We were still afraid of them. Therefore, once in awhile, we just whispered saying: how could we be free? We only asked for enough food to eat, that was all we asked! I thought and wished that I would not die and left my children. I was very hurt, but then this feeling would not make me think about revenge, killing or anything like that. I was afraid; I was only hurt, but then, we should not have. . . at home, in the whole Cambodia, the farmers the destitute, the wealthy people, all had peace, each family had peace. Why would these (communists) do this to us. I was wondering over and over again, not only then, but right now too. When I think about it, I still wonder, and I don't understand it either.

Q. At that time, were you able to organize your life in any way to make it easy?

A. No; I felt I was standing in the middle of an ocean. I could not think about anything; I was totally disoriented.

Q. At that time, was there any loving and caring for one another?

A. Yes, we loved and cared for one another, I mean, we, (the new order people). We the new order people, we helped one another morally, but we had nothing to give to one another. We only knew that this one person was generous, faithful, righteous, compassionate. This was all we knew about one another. There was nothing that showed that we had something to give to one another, no, never.

Q. You said that it was like being in the middle of an ocean. What did you mean by that?

A. Well, we lost hope. We saw no island, no banks (for hope); we had no hope to



live, or to have peace. We had no hope at all.

Q. Did you ever have dreams? Did you have dreams often?

A. I had bad dreams once, after I got to this country. I think I didn't have many dreams. I dreamed that, it was like I was in Thailand, and I saw the people whom I used to know. I saw them sifting dirt for the gems. I asked them: "Don't you want to go to the U.S.? In the U.S., it is peaceful". They said: "Of course we want to go there; but we have *Karma*". I said: "When they called for you, all of you ran away from the camps", this was what I said. After awhile, I walked on and I saw Pol Pot clans. I said to myself: "Oh no, I had peace when I was in America, why did I come here to be miserable like this?" Then I ran and ran and when I looked back at the gem miners, they were gone. I was scared. I met a person who stayed at the camp with me. Right now she is in France. When I met her I asked: "Now, we are away from Cambodia, and Thailand, and we are in a third country; why do we come back here to get stuck?" She said: "Come on, let's run away." She and I ran and got away. That was the only time that I dreamed and had a nightmare. I usually don't dream very much. I didn't dream about my little brother very often. I dreamed about my husband more. I dreamed that I lived under Pol Pot regime. I forgot about Pol Pot, you see. Well, it was like we went back home. I saw my husband smoke his cigarettes. We chatted as though we had come back home from living under Pol Pot. I dreamed about this more often than any other dreams, meaning, we were living together like before 1975. I saw a couple of houses. I didn't go any where too far. I saw ourselves evolving around our house. I had this dream very often, but not every day or every month, only once in awhile, but it was the same dream. Beside this, I dreamed very little.

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

A. I had dreams at the camp, and over here too. But, once in awhile, I saw that the house remained the same.

Q. Under Pol Pot regime, did you ever have a nightmare?

A. I only dreamed about going back home. Under the Khmer Rouge, I usually dreamed about Bar Pailin. I dreamed that I went back home; that was all that I dreamed about. When I was in Cambodia, I dreamed often; I don't dream very often when I live here.

Q. In your dreams, did you see yourself getting to Bar Pailin?

A. Yes, I got to Bar Pailin; I always dreamed about it. The only thing different was that I was not living under Pol Pot regime. I went back to Bar Pailin. When I got



there, I went home and lived there. I saw my house at once.

Q. You have dreamed that you went back to live in Bar Pailin. In your dream, did the people who lived there know that you used to live under Pol Pot regime?

A. In my dream those people knew that I used to live under Pol Pot regime. They just returned home like I did. We were all very happy.

Q. Did you ever have some other dreams, under Pol Pot regime?

A. Under Pol Pot regime, I did not dream about the Khmer Rouge very often. I only saw my house. I always dreamed that I went back home. I always wondered why I never saw them in my dreams. I did not dream of them up to now. You can say that I have forgotten about those people. I never dreamed about the Khmer Rouge. We lived with them, and we suffered a great hardship, but I did not dream about them; how I wondered about this. I never dreamed about them.

Q. When you were in the Thai camps, did you have any dream?

A. When I was in Thailand, I still dreamed about Cambodia. I never dreamed about Thailand; I only say Bar Pailin.

Q. In the U.S., did you have dreams?

A. In my old house, I dreamed about the U.S. once. When I lived in this house, and my child came from Australia, I had a dream. It was a very clear dream that I am living in the U.S. in my house, and working at my American job. Besides that my dreams were not clear. I always saw Bar Pailin. Once, when I lived in the old house on Main street, I dreamed that I returned home from auntie Lin's house, then I woke up. One time, when my child returned from Australia, I dreamed that I lived in this house and that I worked at the local American factory; that was the only time. Besides that, I always dreamed about Bar Pailin.

Q. Ever since you came to the U.S. have you ever dreamed about your husband or your little brother?

A. No; I have not dreamt about my husband or my little brother. I only dreamt about them when I was at the camp. I did not dream about anything when I got here.

Q. In the United States, when you are alone, what do you think about the most?

A. I have done this once in awhile. When I sit alone, I think about my child in Thailand. She is all alone in Thailand. She is over 30 years old now. She was



born one year after we got married.

Q. Why didn't she come with you?

A. No; this is what happened. The citizens of both Thailand and Cambodia can travel back and forth freely. She went to visit Bangkok for a week. In one week, the Khmer Rouge took over the country. She could not get out of Thailand and she has been stuck there until now. When people ask me about her, I do not give much information because she is a Thai citizen. She is married and has two children. She has sent me some photographs. Besides this, I also think about my younger brother. I feel sorry for him. I want him to be with us. My child in Australia is not with us, and another one in Texas is not with us either. This one is younger than my child in Thailand. He has three children; two were born in Thailand, and the other one, a boy was born in Texas. Besides this, I don't think about anything else. I usually don't think about anything, because I usually don't have much time to be by myself. Once in awhile, these thoughts have occurred to me. When I am bored, I watch T.V. Most of the time, my children are around, and I don't really want to think about anything. Thinking about all of that would not do me any good. Before this, I was on the brink of being insane. Before the Vietnamese invasion my daughter could tend to her younger siblings. Two of my children were separated. We got together in Bar Vel, Battambang. My nephew was mobilized by the mobile force. My second child was also mobilized. We were all separated. The boys went to live somewhere which was not known to me. My son and my oldest daughter did not flee Cambodia; the second daughter was taken away to work in Sleik Krey; this is the one whom I told you about who was sent to another town to work over there. This nephew went to Vor Run and was sent away. Oh! I was almost insane; I was confused, crying. . . . Well, when I think about it, what good does it do to me? Now, we are all together. If we are separated, we are separated while we are alive. Those who are left are those who are alive. I am beyond caring. But when I said I don't want to think about it, I still think about it. It was *Karma* that we were separated. This is something I wondered about.

Q. How many months passed by before you saw your children, relatives, nephews, and nieces again?

A. My brothers and sisters saw me in Bar Vel in two months; my younger brother and my son here went to look for them, then we went to live in Bar Vel, Kampong Chhnang Province. We found them there. We inquired about them all the way there, asking people around whether or not they have heard of so and so. Thanks to the person who raised them, I found them. This person now lives in Rhode Island, this is what I have heard. I am thinking about taking my children there to visit the family. The lady is like a foster mother to them. She raised them up. I



heard that she loved them and cared for them very much. I don't want to be bothered; it gives me a headache. I can't think too much; I got such bad headaches whenever I thought about something. Now, I don't want to think about anything.

Q. Did you recall any story at all?

A. If I recall a story, it was under Pol Pot regime. It was when my foot got better from the swellings at which time the unit leader scolded me. I recalled one time when I was boiling medicinal herbs. She wanted me to dry *Kak* (a kind of reed used for weaving mats). She asked me what I was doing sitting in the kitchen and cooking foods. I told her that I was boiling some herbs and that I was about to finish. She went inside my hut and searched around. She suspected that I was cooking with stolen rice. If I had rice she would have me beaten to death. She could not find anything. Well, I was boiling *Pra Khlorb* (medicinal herb) like I told you sister. She found nothing, so she told me to leave right away. I told her: "Yes, I am going right away". When I think about it, I feel very hurt. My younger daughter cried. I just recovered from some swellings. I had no energy, and I could hardly walk. She forced me to say that I can go. When I tried to leave, I couldn't. This lady leader said: "Old lady Naang, go to the gardens". I said: "Sister, I can not go. Can you see, I am using a cane. The unit leader, Chen, told me to dry *Kak*. She said: "Ok, go ahead and dry them if you want to sleep on mats (*Kaks* are used to make mats)". She scolded me. I said: "It is alright if I don't sleep on mats. I have been sleeping on lattices (used to make floor) for 3-4 years now". I have never forgotten these words, meaning: dry the *Kaks*, and you may be able to sleep on mats. She was ironical. It was as though we have never slept on mattresses or mats before. These words hurt me very much. I just got over the sores which were not healed yet. She made me angry. My unit leader, a male, told me not to go and work for fear my foot would bump into things. The female unit leader told me to go. I was afraid of her, so I went, and it was night time. I was not the person who dug the ground. I stood by to hold the baskets which were passed around to carry dirt. When I tossed them, they fell on my foot which then bled. She would not let me go home. I worked until 10:00 p.m. After two or three days of work, my foot hurt again. I told her: "Sister Soeun, I can not go today; my foot hurt again." She scolded me: "That is because you were not on a diet and not eating snails and crabs, which caused your foot to be infected." I said: "Sister, I did not get to eat snails or crabs. I did not know how to catch them. One day, a basket fell on my foot." She said that it was not true and that I should not complain and be sassy. I was afraid of her and I just went to work. I always remember this incident. What could we do; we could not win over her. Therefore, we just went to work.

Q. What are the meanings of all those dreams to you?



A. In my opinion, I would say that whatever place I stayed the longest, I would dream about it. When I woke up right after I dreamed, I usually told my children: "Dear, try to bear it for awhile; we will be free of *Karma* one day soon; we will be free of Pol Pot, because I always dreamed of going back home". We did not know that we would be coming over here. I told my children: we will be free of Pol Pot. I was only thinking of telling my children about those ideas of mine, like working hard, not stealing, or being hard headed. I told them to do whatever the communists told them to, and that they were not stuck yet. They were still young. I, as a mother, did not want to see the Communists beat my children to death. If they were to die, I would rather they died of illness. I told my children: "Dear, if you were to die, you should die of illness (it would be better this way). It is much better than dying from being beaten to death. I would go insane." This is what I told them.

Q. Did these dreams make you have some hope?

A. Yes. I have hope, I have hope again.

A. I don't really understand this very much. But in my opinion, the Communists forced both the adults and the children to work, therefore they had no time to go to school. For example, my children worked days and nights. Therefore, they had no time to study. This is why I don't like the Communist regime.

Q. The Communists were those Cambodians who used to practice Buddhism, and adhering to customs; why did they abolish Buddhism?

A. In my opinion, in the old days, we, Cambodians practiced Buddhism very vigorously. But, we were under (the Communists) commands, they gave us orders, therefore, we were under their authority. They were the Communist leaders. We followed them, because we were afraid to die. When we did something wrong, they would inevitably kill us.

Q. During the Communist ruling, did they keep any customs?

A. I don't know about other towns, but in the town where I lived, they did not preserve any custom. They did not preserve any custom or tradition. I know about our Cambodian customs because I live in Cambodia. I would say that there were no customs at all. There were only single things; that is: work in commune, in units. Once a month, we went to a meeting. I don't really understand about their meetings. I did not pay attention to anything which I did not like.

Q. Did they change the diet?



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 7

Q. What do you think of these Cambodian Communists?

A. I don't like them.

Q. Why don't you like them?

A. Because, well, first, there was no religion, especially, no religion. Second, there were no schools, no market places, no money to spend; then, all of the whole population worked together as units. In Cambodia, in the old days, during the old era, we had our own jobs, we had private business. When we were under the Communist regime, we worked as units and were under their commands. I don't like the Communists.

Q. What do you think of the cause for abolishing religion, and restricting children from going to school?

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Q. Did they change the dish?



- A. They still gave us the same food. There was no change. In the dry season, for example in Bar Vel, which is near a river, people grew cabbages and Chinese radishes. Then, they exchanged these vegetables with rice. The vegetables were then sent to us. They made soups for us with those vegetables once in awhile.
- Q. Then, you had enough vegetables, fish, and some meats to eat, did you not?
- A. Not enough. There was fish once in awhile. In the rainy season, they had people go and catch some fish, and made a soup with some vegetables. We got to eat meat twice a year. A cow or a buffalo was divided between 6 or 7 units. As for fish, we got to eat it only in the rainy season. We did not get to eat them every day through, only once in awhile. Other times, they gave us rock salt, or boiled preserved fish (*Prahok*). My region was very poor.
- Q. Did the Communist dignitaries eat the same kind of foods as yours?
- A. This was what I saw. In my unit, I saw that they ate the same kind of foods as ours. But in my aunt's unit, named Khloh unit, this was what she saw. She was in charge of setting up the tables and washing the dishes for the unit leaders. She said they ate different kinds of foods from us. They had *Ros* fish (Cambodian's favorite), big fish, chickens. As for my unit... I don't know inside their houses, but when they went to eat in the eating hall with us, I saw that they ate the same foods as ours. In my opinion, in their house, they should have sugar, Kerosene... They did not lack anything in their houses. In the people's houses, there was nothing (to eat). Those who could find fish could indeed make fish soup on their own. However, they must eat it at the eating hall. They could not bring foods home to eat. If they make foods, then they could take them to the hall. Some people were able to find things to make bamboo shoot soup, some fish, crabs, or snails which they caught on their own to make soup.
- Q. The Communists were Cambodians, and you yourself are a Cambodian. Did they understand you, thank you, or help your family?
- A. No, they did not. They did not help me in the least. If we were able to work, then they did not mind; but when we were sick, as long as just three days, then they would come and scold you right in your house. I had this kind of experience, you see; They would say: "You have enough now. You have enough to eat, so you can go to work now". I had this kind of experience. They did not help us at all. When we did not have any clothes, then we just did not have them. For those who were in the number one force, they received black *sampots* (skirts) and black blouses which were considered the best clothes. In my case, it was close to 4 years, and I only received a *sampot* and a blouse made from a coarse material. I never received anything pretty. In 4 years, I only received a set of clothes and a



*Krama* (a checkered shawl). They said that I still have something to wear. They said: "Friend, you still had something". At the time, I mended my clothes again and again. When I went to ask for some clothes, they gave some to me. As for my children, each one received two sets of clothes, and they got black clothes twice. I have never received any. My younger sibling also got some clothes twice.

Q. In your village, did they ever take white clothes and dye them?

A. They were good at dying, you know. For example, they took the barks from a *Preeeng* tree, and another kind which tasted bitter, and used them as dyes; then they dipped the clothes in mud solution, well, I don't know. I wore those clothes until the color turned to earth color. They got older and older because I didn't know how to dye them. How could we dye them? We had to wear them right away, and we had no time to dye them.

Q. Does the color have any meaning?

A. In Cambodia, when people wear black skirts and white blouses, they are going to a funeral indeed, or to a Buddhist Temple. But these materials are not white materials, they are a coarse material called *Phadep*. In the old days, we used them to make working clothes. The farmers also wore those. But in Pol Pot regime, the *Phadep*, was special for the Communists since they gave them to us!

Q. Before 1975, did you know anybody who became a Communist when he/she grew up?

A. No, I did not. I was afraid of them; I just remained quiet. In my town, no one was a converted Communist. We did not dare say anything at all!

Q. Do you still remember the words of guidance and counseling or proverbs which your parents passed on to you?

A. They gave me counseling on religious precepts. They made me adhere to the Five Precepts: don't kill any living thing, don't lie, don't commit adultery with your husband, and if you are a man, with other men's wives, don't drink, don't steal. These are the Five Precepts. These are the first codes that should be remembered. My grandmother and my parents taught me these. Before doing anything, we should be considerate of the elderly, and be humble. If we, human beings have consideration for others, humility, and respect, then, we can live (with anybody). When doing business, we should be honest and not cheat or lie. We should do business with justice. For example: two people are quarreling; one person confides in us, and the other party does so too. We should not tell the other party



about his business. This is like taking a fire from a house to hit another house or vice versa. My mother taught me these morals. This means: do not take fire out of the house. When someone tells us something, we should listen, and we should just listen to the quarreling parties. I followed her advice, wherever I went, I seldom had any problem with anybody. I always followed the advice of my grandparents and my parents. They counseled me saying: the world and Buddhist *Dharmas* are the same. When we adhere to the *Dharmas*, it is like adhering to the laws. When we don't violate the *Dharmas*, we don't violate the laws either. They taught me these ideals which I have passed on to my children. We should not follow any codes that are not good for us. I listen to whoever is more educated than I am, even though the person is younger than I am, and that person would be my teacher. At present, I apply the same rule.

Q. Did they tell you a story to illustrate their teachings?

A. They told me stories about Buddha to teach me. My grandmother told me: during the times of Samana Ghotova Buddha, there was a man who was married. He had some children. One day, he saw a monk. The monk was crossing a creek and his image was reflected in the water. The man saw the monk's skin and thigh being very fair. He was thinking to himself. Oh gosh, if the monk were a woman, I would pursue her to be my wife till I succeed. The *Karma* resulted from his thinking this, even though his actions were in his mind. He was reincarnated into a woman in that same life. After being transformed into a woman, he did not dare to go home. Later on, she got married and had children. The husband was a pagoda goer. Buddha asked her: "You are the same as you were before in this life. You were married before. You had a wife and children. Now, you have become a woman. You have a husband and children. In which situation do you love your children the most?" The woman replied: "I would like to tell you that when I was a man, having a wife and some children, I just knew that they were my children, but I seldom took care of them. Now that I have become a woman, I love them more than I did before". Buddha then said: "This is *Karma*. You don't have to commit a sin by action, when you only think in your mind, when you think, you can commit a sin too". Buddha taught us not to think about something that is sinful; this is wrong. This also goes for lying. There was a story that went like this: When Buddha was reincarnated into a ship worker, he met a young Buddhist nun when he arrived on an island. In order to get a lodging and food there, the worker acted as if he were in love with her, and he swindled her. The nun said to him: When you come back, please come and get me; I will leave the monkshood." The ship left for trade for several months. When it came back, the nun left the monkshood and waiting for the man. Buddha, who was the ship worker did not go and get her. When he saw her holding the bundle of her belongings and waited for him, he just left with the ship. He committed a sin. In the next life, when he was reincarnated into another person, people did not believe



whatever he said, and they did not trust him. My grandma said that Buddha told us in the *Dharmas* not to lie. When we lie we will have troubles. I just followed her teachings. I don't know many stories. These are legends, you know.

Q. What is the meaning of or the morals of the story about a man being transformed into a woman?

A. This means that, we commit a sin even though we don't do anything in action. The mere thought about a bad deed can make us a sinner. When we think that we want to mistreat someone, kill someone or whatever, and be vindictive, we may be a sinner. I usually heard religious stories teaching morals, about killing. My grandma told me some stories, but then I have heard them read from the *Sattra* (Buddhist scriptures), or as recited by the monks. Let me tell you the story of Preah Mokalien, who was reincarnated into a man. He was an orphan, without a father, and living with a blind mother. He was married to a girl who did not like her mother-in-law. She instigated her husband to kill his mother if he truly loved her. For his true love for his wife the man then one day put his mother in an ox cart, and took her into a jungle. Since his mother was blind, she could not see anything. He said to his mother: "Mother, I see many robbers; they are coming; what would we do now, mother?" The mother replied: "Son, go ahead and run; leave me here, I am old." He killed his mother. Since he killed his mother, it says in the Buddhist scriptures, that many reincarnations afterwards, he was reincarnated into Preah Mokalien, who was one of Buddha's immediate disciples before going to *Nirvana*. Before this stage, his sub-conscious saw a vision of 500 robbers assaulting him. He was meditating and he saw these 500 robbers because of the *Karma* caused by killing his own mother, lying to her, saying, Mother the 500 robbers are coming. This *Karma* and sin killed him. This is the sin of killing.

Q. What does this story have as a lesson for you?

A. This means that we must respect our parents. The parents who gave us life are our benefactors. This means that we must not mistreat our parents. It also means he commits the sin of killing and lying, all three kinds of deeds. I have listened to the monks reading scriptures. My grandmother also told me about a story that goes: there were two friends who were merchants. They went to do trade from one city to another. One day, both merchants arrived in a village. Merchant A disappeared every night. Merchant B always waited for his return and grumbled: "This person never stays here. He makes me wait and guard the cart. I must take his belongings and hide them". He then hid the belongings. Afterwards, merchant A came back, and merchant B told him: "My friend, someone stole your belongings. You made me guard them, and I was sleepy". Merchant A said: "Well, if they are lost, let it be. Maybe it is my *Karma* because I may have stolen something in my previous life. I am not sorry because I have listened to Buddha's



scriptures read by some monks". After seven days, merchant B gave back his belongings saying: "I thought you went out to the whore house, and got drunk. But, you went to listen to Buddha's scriptures instead. Well, I only hid your belongings". Well, this is all that happened. But, the merchant A was reincarnated into a king. Merchant B was reincarnated into a millionaire. There was a wealthy man in the city. One day, due to the fact that merchant B hid merchant A's belongings in the past life, *Karma* punished B.

Q. Since the owner of the goods knew about his friend hiding them, why then did this friend still have *Karma*?

A. The owner knew about this act, it was true; not only that, but merchant B even gave the goods back to A. Before B gave them back to A, seven days have lapsed, then B had *Karma* because of his lapsed period. The owner longed for his belongings even though he said: "Oh, let them be lost; maybe I committed *Karma* in my previous life". Still A longed for his goods. One day, maybe his eyes played tricks on him, but B the millionaire (B) saw a kind of animal, like a human being, or a spirit with big ears, sleeping. He went to inform the King about it. In past life, the King was the millionaire's friend, but in this life, he does not know him. When the King had an official look for the animal, the official did not find it and he made a report. After it happened three times, the official did not find the animal three times either. As a result, the King had all of the millionaire's belongings confiscated, charging that he told the King some lies. The official said: "What was the purpose behind your story about a spirit, or a human or animal looking like a spirit, or a spirit looking like an animal, sleeping in your house? When we went to look for it, we could not find anything. You even lied to the king. You wasted our time". They then confiscated his belongings. After his belongings were confiscated, the millionaire became destitute. He was a handy man for milling rice by hand for people so he can have some rice to eat. Then, he could have some money to hold religious services. Because of the *Karma* for waiting 7 days before telling the truth to his friend in former life, he was destitute for 7 years. After this period, he saw the same animal. When he saw it, he ran to inform the King again. The King had an official go to look at it and he saw it. When the official saw it, the King then was led to think that the man really saw it, and that he did not lie to him. This looked like a phenomenon. The man had *Karma* which made him see what he saw. They gave the belongings back to the man when they took his belonging to store in a warehouse, such as gold, the gold was stored in huge jars. Two or three of the gold jars were gone. Someone stole his jars from the warehouse. Both the King and the millionaire went to seek audience with Buddha, and asked him why these incidents occurred. The King said: "Seven years ago, I did not believe him. This millionaire told me about this animal, but my official did not find it. Seven years later, we found it. I gave the belongings back to the millionaire, but we still lost his gold jars". Then



Buddha said "Someone stole the gold jars because of *Karma*. The millionaire lied to you (in a former life); it was like stealing, but it was without bad intentions. This means that the King caused the millionaire to worry. The millionaire was destitute for 7 years". This is *Karma* caused by stealing. Can you imagine what would the *Karma* be if one actually committed the act of stealing? This is a lesson, the morals about stealing.

Q. Do you still remember any other proverbs of morals bearing slogans?

A. I don't know much about them. For morals bearing slogans especially, that was all there is, I guess. They are: have respect, humility, the five Buddha's precepts. These are the precepts which I believe in. They are not violating any law.

Q. Do you still remember any legend?

A. In Bar Pailin, there was this story told by our ancestors. Bar Pailin has its roots in a story about a hunter who followed a deer. He came from Thailand. He followed the deer deeper and deeper into the forest. He lost the deer, and he saw another one which he followed until he got to a pond. He shot at the deer which jumped into the pond. The water in the pond splashed and spilled over. He then saw a stone. The hunter washed the stone and examined it. He noticed that the stone shone, but he did not know what it was. He cut bamboos into small pieces and put the precious stones inside. He took them back to town and showed them to the towns' folks. They told him that the stones were valuable. The folks and their friends went to look for the stones. People said that in the old days, one did not need to dig for the stones. All one had to do was to scratch the dirt a little bit and stones could be found which could be gold for a sum of money. Of the 10 people who went to the pond, only three remained. The rest died of rough climate, and dirty water related diseases. Ten or twenty people who went there died. The Kola people went there first. The Cambodians who went there came from Ta Ngaen and Sala Krau areas.

Why Pailin gets this name is like this. The Cambodians did not speak Kola and the Kolas did not speak Cambodian. The Kolas went to strain the stones for precious stones, and saw the otters playing among themselves. Pointing at them, the Kolas asked the Cambodians what the animals were called, to which the Cambodians replied: "*Phe Leng*" meaning playing otters. The Kolas changed *Phe Leng* to *Phai Lin*. *Phai Lin* was really *Phe Leng*. So, they called the town *Phe Leng*. After awhile, *Phe Leng* was changed to *Phai Lin*. It was the Cambodians who called the town Pailin. The Kolas called Pailin because they could not say *Phe Leng* correctly. Our ancestors called the town *Phe Leng*. The Cambodians lived there too, but they stayed around Sala Krau and Ta Ngaen areas. They planted rice and had vegetables gardens. My grandmother came to live in Pailin



since she was 14 years old. As for the Mountain Yaot (Phnom Yaot), the Cambodians named it after old lady Yaot. Our ancestors said that in the old days, Mountain Yaot had magical power. When someone came to Pailin from another town, the person had to go and pray to Mountain Yaot's spirit. The Kolas built a small hall there. They built a temple at the top of the mountain, and two *stupas*. There were some monks in the temple. The *stupas* were painted gold from gold leaves. At the top of the *stupas* were two big umbrellas painted with gold, adorned with gems, zirconias, sapphires, and rubies, hanging down from the rims. I would estimate the cost to be in the thousands in the old days when money's value was low. I would say that the Khmer Rouge took all of them. In either 3 or 7 years, people took the umbrellas down once to dab them with golden leaves. Some people who wanted to contribute something, would donate some rugs or pendants to be suspended from the umbrellas. They would fix the jewelry there. The jewelry were very valuable. The *stupa* at the top was bigger than the one at the bottom. The lower one was built first, but the one at the top housed a lot of jewelry, gems, and zirconias. The Cambodians, the Chinese and the Kolas who wanted to contribute to the pagoda left a lot of jewelry there.

- Q. Were the *stupas* used for people's ashes? If so, whose ashes are they?
- A. People put some ashes there. They are from Burma. I suspected they are not Buddha's ashes. They were Anandha's ashes (Buddha's disciple). People said that Buddha's ashes resembled Chinese cabbage seeds; they were small. But those ashes were as big as corn kernels or beans. They were probably Anandha's or Arahant's (immediate disciples) ashes. I don't know whether or not it was true, but I just followed other people's beliefs.
- Q. Was there anything else on Mountain Yaot?
- A. On Mountain Yaot there were imprints of Buddha's feet. The chief monk (Lok Ta Ov) bought them and installed them there. Before this, they were installed in the Kang Kaang temple. Later on, the chief monk had them installed on the Mountain Yaot, in a building. The building was not very big.
- Q. Were the imprint of Buddha's feet really made by men?
- A. I have not seen the, but I heard people say that they were the replicas of the imprints from Preah Baat. My aunt went to that place, but she passed away now. I have never seen them. People said that the mountain is in Chieng Mai.
- Q. Do you still remember some poetry?
- A. I still remember some poetry in Kola not in Cambodian. I have a problem talking



- about them.
- Q. Then, if you have some problems talking about them or interpreting them, please tell us about their essence and meaning.
- A. The poems gave us guidance as: the changeable and unpredictable physical body of human beings. We are born, we are inflicted with illness and we die. Our life is like a spinning wheel. After we are born, we get old, we get ill, then we die. We don't know when the time will come for us to die. We should not exhibit bad deeds inside ourselves. We should only remember good advice because we don't know when our time will come. We feel death is so far, but death is so close; we don't know whether we will die today, tomorrow, or this evening, tonight, next month, or next year. Death is much closer than the next life. Therefore, I don't want to see bad deeds, only good deeds. The next life is so close, and nothing is permanent or remains unchanged.
- Q. What are your ideas about next life?
- A. I don't have much opinion about it, but I always believe that once I was born, I will get old, I will get sick, and I will die, then I will be born again, this much I believe. I also believe in hell and paradise, and I will always believe this. I don't know, I can't see any fortune from my previous life.
- Q. Have you prepared yourself for next life?
- A. I don't know when I will die; I can't see this date. I only know for sure about a person being born and dying, but I wouldn't know when it will be, what day, month, or hour. I only know for sure that when one is born, one will die. This I know more than anything else.
- Q. Have you ever created a story yourself or used a story which you have heard to guide or give advice to your children?
- A. No, I don't know any story, I taught them what my grandma or my mother taught me. For example, I taught them about wanting other people's belongings. They should only want what belongs to them, and not want that of other people. These precepts are my only advice. Whatever they want to possess will have to be acquired through their own efforts, money, or making. If they belong to other people, they should not want them.
- Q. Is there anything in your life under the Communist regime which can be used as lessons to teach the future generation?



- A. In my own opinion, there was nothing I can use for lessons. I don't use any of the models in that life. Right now, whatever my children want to eat, I buy for them, because they used to starve under Pol Pot. Whatever they want to wear, I will bring for them because I used to see my children suffer under Pol Pot. I don't want to follow his guidelines because I don't like that regime.
- Q. Were there any good deeds in the five years under the Khmer Rouge which are meant for the next generation?
- A. There was no good deed that is beneficial to the future generation. There were no morals, bearing proverbs, or principles to guide the people either.
- Q. Do you remember the Khmer Rouge's words?
- A. I don't remember the Khmer Rouge's words very much. They want us to "fight" when doing our work, "fighting the front and the back battlefields", building dams, stopping the gutters, whatever they meant.... I don't remember them very much, because I didn't pay any attention to them. I am telling you the truth, I really hate them. I just went to work like everybody. I didn't listen to whatever was discussed during the meetings, because I really hated them, I didn't like them. They did not allow us to use the words "Pa" and "Mak" for our fathers and mothers. They wanted us to use "Puk" and "Mae" (used by the farmers). If they knew us, they used the word "Mae" for the women, and "Puk" for an elderly man, or among themselves. Usually they called us comrades or friends. I don't remember their expressions very much because I didn't pay attention to them. We discussed among ourselves whether or not we had ever heard such words. Even among us old Cambodian folks, such as old lady Teng, who was the same age as myself, said: "Gee, Naang, even I have not heard such expressions". She did not pay attention to them either. She was also a Cambodian. I don't remember those expressions. I forgot them. They sounded like they were obscure or abstract words. I didn't remember those Khmer Rouge's words. They usually used them at meetings which I usually skipped. These meetings were held in my sister's unit. If I went to attend them, I usually went on to my sister's place. I didn't know what was going on, I was old, you see. I didn't pay attention. I went to the meetings once in awhile, therefore, I didn't remember, understand or know the strange vocabulary. At first they told us that when we did something wrong, they would educate us before punishing us. As for the word "educate", I was very frightened. I always thought: what does the word educate mean? I was afraid they would kill us you know? I don't understand too much. Later on I found out that "Kor Saang" (educate) meant education. At first, everyone was frightened to death. I didn't understand their language too much. They used our ordinary language, but in an abstract sense during meetings. I went to attend them once in a great while. I didn't like them, but I was scared of the Khmer Rouge. Since I



was old, they didn't pay much attention to me at all.

Q. What was discussed at these meetings?

A. I didn't understand them. That was just it, you see; I did not know what was going on. Out of 10 meetings, I went once, but I still did not understand much.

Q. Were there songs about fun or happiness?

A. There might be some songs about them, but when they held ceremonies or celebrations I never attended any of them. I only went to attend a common wedding of 20 couples. I heard they had dancing and some singing. It was held at the children's unit which was far from mine, over one km. I could not hear the dancing and singing very much. I only heard the drum, I didn't like to go there. I felt like I was fed up. I didn't want to go anywhere at all. It was pitch dark, and I could not see anything at all. I didn't pay any attention or have any desire to attend these gatherings. I usually did not attend them since my children did not like them either.

Q. Do you have any goal to fulfill for the next five years?

A. I don't have any. I am old, and I don't think about anything at all; I have no goal at all.

Q. Why do you say that you are old. What does this mean? Why don't you think of yourself for the next five years?

A. In the next five years, the best that can happen is that I will get my retirement benefit, if they let me have it at 62. But I may have to wait seven more years if the retiring age is 69. I don't have any goal. If I don't get my retirement, then I will just work until then. I don't think about anything at all, that is all. I am content with what I've got. Dr. Mollica said that I should not say that I am old. We must think that, well, according to our age, we must realize that we are this old, at our age, if it were for the sun, it is setting, it is not noon or dawn. I should know this. I don't have any goal for anything, or any plan, it is impossible for me



## INTERVIEW 2 - PART 8

- Q. Do you have any hardship and/or happiness in your life in the U.S.A.? What are your goals in this life?
- A. We are very happy in the U.S. I don't have any worry at all ever since I stepped onto U.S. soil. I arrived in the U.S. on February 28, 1982. I have been happy till today. I have never had any sorrow. I have lived in the U.S. and have studied here for almost three years. After I studied for two years, I worked for one year. After this year of work, I was laid off, and I worked at another place, a shoe store. This job requires physical strength and I have to stop school until now. My whole family is happy and does not have any worry. I thank Jesus Christ for my being in the U.S., because he has helped our people all the refugees to get over the sorrow and the plight and I want to thank the U.S. government, and the Churches, and the teachers for teaching me, and my children, I want to thank them, and all the American people in general. My daughter finished high school in 1986. Now, she is over 20 years old, and is working because she is not very educated. She found a job, and might not be able to continue school. I still have two more children. If they finish high school, and if they can endure it, I'd like for them to go on to college, but I don't know whether or not they can do it. I want these two boys to go to college. My daughter also wants them to go to college. She said that when she makes enough money, she might also want to go back to school. Now, she wants to help me, her mother, and her younger brothers, her older sibling, here aunt and cousin. She has been here for awhile, now she is working to help provide for the family.
- Q. Do you have any goal to fulfill for the next five years?
- A. I don't have any. I am old, and I don't think about anything at all; I have no goal at all.
- Q. Why do you say that you are old. What does this mean? Why don't you think of yourself for the next five years?
- A. In the next five years, the best that can happen is that I will get my retirement benefit, if they let me have it at 62. But I may have to wait seven more years if the retiring age is 65. I don't have any goal. If I don't get my retirement, then I will just work until then. I don't think about anything at all, that is all. I am content with what I've got. Dr. Mollica said that I should not say that I am old. We must think that, well, according to our age, we must realize that we are this old, at our age, if it were for the sun, it is setting, it is not noon or dawn. I should know this. I don't have any goal for anything, or any plan; it is impossible for me



to do anything. I only want to do whatever I can to live with my children. If I have a long life, then I will be forever more indebted to God you know. For example, I thank Dr. Mollica very much for helping me like this. Nowadays, I don't have any plans for anything. I have no education whatsoever, no money, no idea at all.

Q. When they are this old, what do our Cambodian women think about?

A. We don't know what to do. We don't know when we will die. The death date is getting closer to us now. There is only the death date coming one of these days. In our country, when we are this old, we would go to the pagoda and adhere to Buddha's principles and teachings, to rid ourselves of lust, and greed. At present, we live in the U.S., and we work in the factories. There are no sins or merits. We are all equal. In Cambodia, at my age, we would go to the pagoda at least four times a month, this is every Saint day. When I was young, I went to the pagoda four times a month every month, every Saint day. When I was young, I went to the pagoda twice a month, on the full moon day, and the end of the lunar month. Sometimes I stayed at the Buddhist nuns' hall because I was old, and I could not do hard work.

Q. The doctor said that he did not understand why you said that you are old and that you do not think about yourself. Do you have any plans for your life?

A. No I don't. I live with my children, that is all. I work and I rest after work, that is all. I don't think about anything. That is the truth, I don't think about anything at all. This is enough for me.

Q. Have you ever thought about dying in the near future?

A. Yes I have. I still remember the slogan: "We were born, we get old, and we die. We don't know when we would die." But I don't want to die, you know, but dying is very real. But I don't doubt the fact that I am near death, like today, or tomorrow, I don't doubt about that yet. I don't have any belief... But we are this old, and we as Cambodian women we have no project of any kind at all. I don't know about politics, and we never had any business before either. We don't have a good education to make us think in the long range. I am happy with what I have got. I don't think about anything at all.

Q. Have you ever thought that you want to rest now or you want to stop thinking about your own personal future?

A. Yes. I don't think about anything. If there is one thing that I think about it would be: if all my children have a job, and when I have money, I would like to travel,



this is all. I don't want to think about anything. I want to visit some countries which I have not seen. I have no plans to do business, or do anything; I have none whatsoever. I don't know anything at all. My two children will grow up, and have a job and have money. I work and I will save money. I only want to travel. I only want to help my two children realize their goals.

Q. You had a very difficult life since your childhood till the present time. Have you ever thought that you are tired of everything and quite fed up, and want to rest?

A. Yes I have. I would like to, but I can't rest just yet.

Q. When can you have a rest from your hard life?

A. Until I will be 62 or 65 years old.

Q. Why did Buddha give a bitter life since childhood until now?

A. Buddha did not mistreat me. I have mistreated people in previous life. I did bad deeds in previous life.

Q. Do you remember your life in the previous life?

A. No, I don't.

Q. What kind of life will you have in your next life?

A. How can I know about this, I don't know anything at all.

Q. If you can change your life at all, what episode in your life would you like to change?

A. If I am not old, the one thing that I like to do is to go to school, that is all. I only want to study English; I don't want to think about anything at all. This is that I know the American people's language even better, because I don't understand it very much.

Q. If you were in Cambodia, what would you do?

A. If I were in Cambodia, at my age, I don't know what to do either. We, human beings, we are tired. We are this old, it is hard for us to think about anything. For the rich people and the educated ones, it is easy for them to think about something. When we are poor and have no education, it is hard for us to think. We don't know what to think about.



- Q. Your husband was many years your senior. Have you ever regretted for marrying an old man for a husband?
- A. I have never thought about that. I don't think about that very much, because I never got angry with him. He was a good man.
- Q. Have you ever thought about longing for a kind of life that would be much happier or easier than your real life?
- A. I don't think about that. It is as if it is too late for me. I don't think about anything at all. I am not regretting anything either.
- Q. You have both sons and daughters. Is it necessary or important that your sons or daughters go to school?
- A. I want all of them to go to school. But my daughter(s) can't go just yet. As a mother, I love my children equally. I want all of them to go to school and have a prestigious life. I can't do anything when they themselves can't do it.
- Q. Why can't your daughter go to school?
- A. The reason she can't go to school is because we have to have money. I have seen that when Naet went to school, there were tuition and board (food). But when the mother's poor, and there was no money, how can she go to school? Some people are good students. We have to get some aid from the State, right? We are not good students, so the State doesn't help us. We have no money, and we can't afford it.
- Q. What episode of your life in the U.S. can give you more happiness than any other episodes in the U.S.?
- A. Happy? Well, in America, we have freedom in every field. Nobody can tell us what to do. Just don't violate any law. We use our own strength to perform a job. We get enough to eat and to spend on our own accord. Nobody gives us any orders. Just don't violate any law. This is what makes me happy. Then, when my family and I arrived in the U.S., it was like an eye opener for us. Before, we were like blind people. Now, we are enlightened in every field. I want to thank God, and Jesus Christ for helping my family. I thank God all the time for helping me to get to America. I said that it was like being blind, during the Khmer Rouge era, because my children did not get to go to school and they did not know about anything at all. Now, my children are enlightened, and I thank God for it, for leading us to America. I thank God, and Jesus Christ for helping my family cross a big ocean. It is just like people who fell into a ravine and who could climb up



again.

- Q. Which episodes of your life gave you the most hardship in the U.S.?
- A. The most difficult part was the beginning, the past when I didn't know the English language.
- Q. In what ways was the Cambodian women's life more difficult than Cambodian men's life?
- A. In my opinion, the city people are one type, and the country folks another type. For the country folks, men have a more difficult life than women do. As for the city people, women have a slightly more difficult life than men do. In my opinion, the city women have servants, it is true, but they have their own children too. This means that the servants can't perform the jobs the way the mistress wants them to. The mistress had to do things herself to be satisfied. She had to take care of her children herself and go to work too. Men are the providers. Farmer men had a more difficult life than the city men do, because they had to take care of water and fire woods. Yes, I say that city women had a much more difficult life than city men. The hardship lies on the fact that they don't trust their servants. I observed my older brother and I saw it for myself. I have never had servants, because I lived in Bar Pailin. It was just like a mountain area, a country place. In my town, men had a much more difficult life than women do. They took care of the water and fire woods themselves. Their work was hard.
- Q. In America, how difficult is the life of a widow?
- A. In my opinion, in America, even when we have a hardship, it would still be easier than in Cambodia. A widow has difficulties. Just like me, I go to work, and still have to support my children who are this age, two boys, I have to pay for their clothes, their food, and other commodity, I pay for everything. I still have some difficulty. No matter how hard our life is, we are still happy because we have freedom in every field. Even though we have a hard time, we are happy. Physically we have a hardship, but mentally, we are happy.
- Q. How do you feel about the interview on your life or other women's life?
- A. I think that, this interview has a general benefit, and reflects the life and the hardship of the Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge regime.
- Q. Have you ever told your children about your life story?
- A. I never told them about it.



Q. Why have you not told your children about your life story?

A. I have not told them about it. When my mother passed away, I just told my children about the ways I raised my younger siblings, themselves, and myself, that was all. How do I have time to tell my children about my life when I am a business woman? I have been working all the time.

Q. Are you happy now that the person who has your biography is right in front of you?

A. Yes, I am very happy.