## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 1

RM ...Cranston, Rhode Island, on August 26, 1989 we've decided to do this interview in English, that Svang is going to start the first interview on the family background and history.

Q. Do you want me to ask in English too?

A. Yeah, go ahead.

Q. (RM: I think we can do the whole thing in English, where you just ask the questions in English, right?)
Where did you grow up, and did you have any brother and sister, and what number of child were you? And also what did your parent do for a living? (RM Yeah, this is just the general background of your childhood.)

A. I was born in Cambodia--*Phnom Penh*, in a capital city, *Phnom Penh*. My mother's reared eleven children. We are very big family. We have six girls and five boys. I am the number third child. My father, he is a--how you call *douane*. Like a people who is? I don't know how to describe. He's a *Douane*--It's more like a police military, but he is a custom agent (Speaks to Svang in Khmer). That's *Douane*, but I don't know how to call it in English. (ST. *Douane*, that's French word)

Q. So he worked for the government.

A. Yeah. Most of my people, most of people--Cambodian, they work for the government.

Q. It's in French right? In other words he was an official, some kind of an official.

A. Yes, yes. And I am the number third child. From time to time, I am one of the lucky ones according to my family, because I'm one of my mother favorite little girl. When I turned seven years old my mother sent me to learn how to be a royal dancer for the king. To be with the king for five years, I did change a lot. I got involved, I played a lot with prince and princes, and a lot of high-class children. From that time on I started to get my beauty, I mean because I change from a little girl to a--how do you call it--like a...teenager. And my mother started to worry, because in my country most of the princes they always play with women, it's just for their pleasure; they never will consider it to be serious.

Q. So your mother thought that they would take advantage of you...(SP: Yeah.) In other words, that they would want you for sex or something like that, but not for say, because they loved you.

A. Yes, because of that my mother tells me not to do that anymore. So I want to be a dancer very much, but I had no choice. So being Cambodian woman, being Cambodian daughter you have to do whatever your parents say, even you like it or not. I think you have been through that yourself. And from that time I quit being a king dancer. I still go to school. During that time I cannot spend so much time in school either, because my mother is more like a old fashioned woman; that she figured out women know how to write, know how to read, do a little bit of the letter and take care of the bills she be all set, and stay home and take care of the children. Because of that my mother tell me to quit school also.

Q. How old were you at the time?

A. I was fourteen years old.

Q. Fourteen years old. So she--could you read, and were you good at Cambodian writing...

A. Yes. I did read and write Cambodian and French.

Q. So she had you quit first the dancing and then school.

A. Yes. First, I go the dancing class for two years after and then the school. So during that time I still study by myself, you know, read the book--I love to read; and all kind of good book or nasty book, teenager book, or any kind of book I love to read. This is the thing that to let me knew out of the book a little, but more than, you know some teenager going to stay home and do everything their parents say. I do what my parents say, but I also cheating to read some book I'm not supposed to read. That's about it, anything else...

Q. Well, you remember when you were in the palace; I mean what was it like they're for a young Cambodian girl learning how to be a dancer?

A. I feel very proud, because according to--I live in a middle class neighborhood; compared to those neighborhood, my mother's sister one of the famous family, because my father had made lots of money and so does my mother. We have more than middle class. Many people in my country would have the refrigerator or television. In my house yes we do. Many family would have moped or motorcycle for each children, but my family does. And according to that I feel so proud being my mother and my father child. Beside, I got so much attention from my mother, because we just more than mother and daughter, we more like very

close friend. Not many Cambodian women would share the way you feeling like you fall in love at the first sight, or you feel like--especially when you have your period and everything. Not many children tell their mother about what they feel because they are very shy. But I do, I'm very open with my mother. She's not just a mother; she's the best friend in the world.

Q. And you had a similar relation with your father?

A. No. This was because my father was a very good-looking man. I take after her, thank you. He had a lot of girlfriend. And also--I love him dearly, but I'm also very jealous the way he did to my mother. I know that I am jealous at him for my mother. And my mother thinks she want to be a very good wife; she's afraid to say much of thing to him. But I cannot take the pain that she have. So I am the one who had very bad mouth, who tell him not to do--you know, he used to be a good husband and, "you not good to my mother." More like I treat him more like a step father, but he is my real father, but the way he did to my mother... You follow me? Like sometimes I caught him with the nude girlfriend, I would chase her out, tell her he had many children, and she not worth it, and she not going to fit to my family. My father--according to Cambodian child I 'm very bad to my father, because you should respect your parent, whatever your parent say you should respect. I respect my mother, but not my father. And that's why he's more like a, hold up on me, you know, all the children would listen to him, but not me. When I grow up I know the rule of Cambodian, you have to obey your husband and be a good wife, you have to do everything your husband said. But soon I see the way my father treat my mother. It's not hundred percent bad. He never hit her. He never, you know, take all the money from her, but the way he cheating--just go in bed with somebody that I saw, it just made me feel like if I grow up I want to be very independent. I won't let any man treat me like my father did to my mother. But the other hand, I love to have a husband who really cares so much about children and about wife like him. He love my mother very much, but he cannot help because the job he have, and the way he look...It's just they come to him, one thing the way he look, the other thing because he have money.

Q. Now what about when you're in the palace...what kind of behavior did you see between men and women in the palace?

A. It's different because most of the children that I involved with, they are very high class. They more higher class than me. Mostly they come with their maid. They have been fun. Mostly like they are very polite, they are very sensitive, but they're also very demanding; because each children always have their maid to follow them, to dress up for them, to carry food for them. But they also are very polite. Some are very, very nice children, very nice kid. Some are very selfish. I think that happens with any kind of class. It doesn't matter high class or low class. Some high blooded brought up their children very nice and strict. Some just

brought them up loose, because they figured out they are rich; they can do everything they want. I know one of the Prince *Sihanouk'* s daughters. Her name is *Socheat Wathya*. You heard her name too. She's a beautiful girl. She's very, very pretty, but she's also...I don't think those girl doesn't know how to be a child, a real childhood, like be a normal children. Everything she does, everybody always do it for her. See, I don't know how she been through *Pol Pot* residence like we did, because I keep thinking about all the prince and princess during *Pol Pot* residence, because they do everything--somebody else do for them. You follow me? And so the normal child, you do everything you own. And I think that they don't have that chance to improve themselves, to know how much they can do. But they were very nice. I had no problem of making friends with any kind of children or any kind of class. One thing I feel, I feel very confident of myself. When I feel right, I feel like I have a right to do a lot of things that I'm not supposed to feel like that in Cambodia. I should feel it here, but not in Cambodia, you know, because... But there I go to have the class, the class that I think they have like a...Cambodian people do school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and we have first day off. We go to school Friday and Saturday. We have Sunday off. I have dance class twice a week. For twice a week that's a different change between weekly and twice a week. Between like Monday and Wednesday I will be a normal child, go to school like everybody. From Thursday I feel different, because in a different group, a different class. So I learned, but for me I make friend fine with them. They are very nice--I didn't see them for whole time. When you go, you go to school you more like when you go to school to ballet or anything you would have time to share, to talk, but over there it's different. You constantly have class start--I don't remember what time, I think eight to twelve. Then you have lunch, and you start from one to three o'clock. I'm very sure they have lunchtime for you, then you go back to dance again.

Q. What would you say, what did you learn if there is anything about the Cambodian ballet class? What would you say as a child was the most valuable thing you learned in ballet?

A. Compared with ballet and Cambodian--the time is different, because over here ballet, I saw on TV, look I don't know much about the way you do exercise, the way you try to practice, the way you bend yourself...you know learn to listen to music and everything. You have time to talk to each other. Or maybe I'm wrong. You know I never know much about ballet in this country, but I see it through the TV, I read the book a little, but like the way you bend yourself, the way you...you know like you have to do lots of exercise. During that time you concentrate, but you also have time to talk, to get to know each other during the class. But Cambodian child is different. Cambodian music, when the music starts to go on everybody on the line. You can talk, but you cannot talk so much, because if you listen to the tone of the music, you'll miss the line or you'll miss the thing that you're supposed to do. You ever see Cambodian dance, Cambodian classical

dance? (RM: Yes.) Do you see the way they dance, the way they move? For each action you have to listen to the tone of the music. The way you done in here you follow the music, but over there you follow the music, also your whole body--you have to let the music into your body the way you move. The way you see, like you step or you just turn your hand, you turn your leg, you turn your foot, you turn your hip, I mean your whole body is going in all these position. I don't know you understand what I'm saying or not. Because what you said like example, the music start to be on, you start to do your hand like this. From here and here they have the meaning, and you have to listen to exactly the tone of the music. And when you do like that, you lay, and your knee is going the same time (Speaks to Svang in Khmer, our Cambodian called "*choet*")...The music start to go like this. You see? It starts to go all the way down, and if you miss the tone, you miss the thing that they go to say like this. (Demonstrates) Your knee, you start to hit your knee. Hit the balance off the floor. You follow me? So what I'm saying, to make friend with them, first thing they make that in about one hour, and they make friends during lunchtime. When the class starts, they are very strict. They don't want you to talk. They want you to concentrate. The way you walk, the way you--I think it must be even the way you talk over there, they have like a...we call, how do you call (speaks in Khmer to Svang King's language). You had to use that word like instead of...We had different kind of language. Like American you use straight no matter with king or with queen, or with anybody you use English language. Cambodian is different. I would speak to Svang in Cambodian. We do understand each other. But if you talk to the king or the queen, we use high-class language. (ST: There are different words for the king). We use with the one, and then we go to the temple--we use the different type of language. I don't know, you understand me?

Q. So how many years did you perform--were you in school, dance school?

A. I start four. I got over there for four years. And seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and I quit.

Q. So you were there from four to eleven, seven years.

A. Oh no, I'm sorry, no. Started I'm seven years old. So then, eight, nine, ten, eleven and I quit.

Q. And did you...I guess what I'm trying to say is did dance become your whole life, or you had a lot of other things you were doing? (SP: Beside that?) Yeah. I mean when you're learning how to be a ballet dancer is that basically how you spend most of your time, thinking about the ballet?

A. Not really. Because at that time I'm very out going, I have a lot of friend in my neighborhood. I would play a lot with my other friend at home. I play baton, how

you call, and baton right? I played that. We play soccer ball with my friend. I would play...(speaks to Svang in Khmer) I play a lot like a normal children. But I do appreciate to be that, because you dress up, and you are in a rich high-class people. That moment I appreciate very much, but I also like my regular friend, I mean more like my friend around my neighbor, because we share a lot. But I never considered my life to be in the king's dancer, because something I have in my mind is not going to fit in there. One thing according to those prince or princess, you have to know how to please them. You not supposed to say something that is not nice. You have to be not honest. I don't think I can do that, because I could be like, if they do right thing I have to say, "right," if they do wrong thing, I would say," wrong." You know like brown nose? And I'm not that type of person. I'm not that type, because even I'm brought up to be proud to be in my family, and my mother...(voices overlap)

Q. In other words, you'd have to conflict with...

A. But some they could do. When you a brown nose, you probably can make such a very good job from that moment, because very--I don't know how much money they make over there lately, but the reason that I love art so much being, you know, dance, I got what I want, but seem to be I never picture myself to be a king's dancer the rest of my life, no.

Q. How old are...you could be a king dancer 'till how old?

A. Frequently stay over there until sometime they are getting old, sometime until you are fifty, or sometime they married with the, you know, one of the kings or relative, or one of the friend. You can make good money from that, but for me. According to me for the--to be a dance, you have to look pretty all the time. I think when you getting older nobody pay much attention to you anymore. I mean this is all happen all over the place. When you dance, you show off your beauty, you show off how pretty you look. You just try to turn...the people who look at you, not just interested in the way you dance, is also interested in your body also, the way you move, the way you talk. And I don't think I'm that type of person. But I do love to be a king dancer, but just for a hobby, not for my living.

Q. Did you do any performances; I mean did you have any very special performances you remember?

A. (Speaks to Svang in Khmer, National dance) Yes. I was in that club, but not for long, about two or three months.

Q. I mean did you get to perform in front of the king or at high ceremonies?

A. Yes. We perform in front of the mother of Prince *Sihanouk*. We do that several times. But it's not a big performer that I have to wear all the jewelry for the prince. It's just a performance where you wear something extra special, because today the queen will come to visit you in (words said in Khmer). That's why you do a number of times. And sometimes I will go all over the, how you call it...palace. Sometimes I will go all over the palace just to visit the friend that I know of. Maybe I was too young to get too much excited to know how my interest in it are, but I never do a big number, or a big performance that I have to wear all the costume, or the dance costume. I never done that yet, but it's just extra, you know, a special satin blouse on the top. And you have to show off the pink for the queen when she comes to see it. It's just there in my class, but it's not a big performance to all the people that can see it, no.

Q. What did you think of your mother stop--was that disappointing for you when your mother said you couldn't be a dancer anymore?

A. I think the way I brought up, I figured out whatever you tell say it's right. First of all I'm a little disappointed, but I also saw the reason is like; I saw some of my mother friend that she got pregnant from that. The child become have no father, because he doesn't feel like this is belong from him and he is one of the king. The relatives, I don't know...(speaks in Khmer) relate more like a prince, not a prince--it's related after prince. I just figured out I don't like that, but one thing that I like the most when--I love the music, I love to dance. But I also most think that I perform for the queen, I'm not so excited...I'm most excited for me when I perform for my mother at home. I can see the glowing eye of her look, like this. I know no matter what I do she loves me. And to do for the prince, for the queen, I figured out there are so many children about my age that dress better. They look better. They have special training. They don't have to go to school like I do. They stay home, and they just learn how to dance all the time. They don't have to do their homework. They do all learning. You can tell how different, how talented, how good they are compared to me. So I figured out, it just...I like it, but I'm not crazy about it. Does that answer your question? (RM: Yeah, sure.)

Q. What was the economy of your family?

A. The economy of my family...

Q. Yeah, she's talked a little bit about that, but how would you describe, for instance, the quality of your relationships, you already talked about your mother and father, but also what you brothers, sisters, relatives, I mean...

A. Oh, they are very close. We fight a lot, but we get together very--we fight a lot, but we make up so often too.

Q. What do you mean you fight a lot?

A. Well, it's hard because you have only one mother and one father, and when you are a child, it seem to be that my mother had children every year. And when we grow up, we almost look about the same. I mean it's one year older than the other me and my younger sister in the Cape Cod right now, we been through so much. Being in childhood, when your mother bought something for you, if one in that group wanted, for example, like I say my mother bought two or three dozen mangoes right? She already picked a good one from the market already, but being a child you always want the best, in that three dozen. If I want it, so does my sister, so does my brother. We all want something the same. And the rest want it. Then we fight. But we obviously make up a lot, because my mother, she's a very smart lady, she always thinks out a way to let us make up. But sometimes she cannot take it also, because too many children for her. I don't know how can she do it.

Q. How much of them did she have to look...(SP: Eleven.) She had eleven children.

A. Eleven children alive. She had three miscarriages.

Q. And you were...

A. I am number three. I had one brother--one older brother and one older sister.

Q. And as you look back on this, why do you think your mother had so many children?

Q. Well, in my country...one thing, they had no birth control. And most women in my country, I don't according to what I look back, you could please your husband more than yourself. Being a good wife no matter your husband has right or has wrong, your husband and you have to obey him, just want to be a good wife. And that's why I fight for my mother for that. When your husband goes to work, make the money, give you all the money, you consider he to be a good husband. Even he cheating you--one thing that I don't like, they give more power to men. It's OK for men to cheat because he's a man. Is that right? You are a woman you cannot do it--that's not fair! I don't mean woman has to cheat when their husband cheated too, I don't mean that. Why you can't be just one by one, and you cannot mind not cheating? And this is the way I am not happy with my father, because the way I see he cheating. Of course he give some money to his girlfriend. But my mother sees everything.

Q. Well, probably also what you're saying too, right, is that your mother had these eleven children thru your father, and he should have been more devoted to her, because she devoted her whole life to him.

A. Yes. She gives up her whole life for him, you are right. Because one thing that she do, and I think most of Cambodians who do would do the same. When you are a child, you do everything for your parent. Even if you fall in love with a guy, you going crazy for him, you cannot marry him unless your parents say you have to marry that guy or this guy. I got married by an arranged marriage. I didn't love my husband until I had one child. So by the time--this is what I've been through myself, poor position. And after I think that, I think all women have been through this same position. When you are a child, you do everything for your parent. This is talking about being a good daughter, OK. By the time you grow up, your parent have fixed up you to get married with somebody. For that time you're all done being good little girl. Now you come to become a woman. You have to be somebody's wife. You would do everything for your husband. You care less about yourself. You care about your husband, and your family name. By that time you become pregnant and you have children; you care about your husband and your children. You never had time to think about yourself. So your husband, be sure the children have enough food to eat, be sure the house clean enough for your husband to come home and be happy. You never have time for yourself. And even your husband cheat once in a while, you think that is because you spend so much time with the children at home. It's not fair. She loves him so much. So do I, I love my husband so much. So from that time, for that three generation being good children, being good wife, being good mother, you never had time for yourself. This is why, after my children lost, after my parent lost, I don't want this to happen, but this is the time that I sit down and thinking out for myself; this about time for me to have time for myself. Start to enjoy for my life, because I'm done being a good daughter, I'm being a good wife, I' m being a good mother, and all of a sudden everything, it just disappear with no reason. This time for me, I figure this is for me to be myself. Not to be crazy, go on a street and call a man, but to be--at least I do what I want to do. I don't have to cook for somebody if I don't want to. I don't have to clean the house if I don't want to. I can go shopping. I can do everything I want.

Q. And how is that now, I mean, do you feel better about that?

A. I feel better, but I feel homesick a lot. I feel like I miss being all those things. I miss being a daughter and miss being somebody's wife, being somebody's mother. I miss being a mother so much. I feel lonely of course, but the other hand, maybe this is the point lie to myself, to keep my strength, to keep my life on going, because right now...even I love the freedom in this country a lot, but I also like my culture too. Mostly inside, I'm very brought up in a old, old culture, that it's hard for me to go out with anybody that I just know. It's hard for me to become too American, and I cannot go back to old, old culture in my country. Yes, I do happy. I'm very happy. I'm very independent right now, but I also very lonely. Does that answer your question?

Q. Right. Now as you look, talking about the old culture, as you look on Cambodian, I mean, how would you also describe, for instance, were you a religious kid? What were sort of the other things from the old culture from when you were growing up that were really important to you.

A. I'm just--very important because like, we had some special kind of ceremony, right. How do you call *Phcum Ben*, how do you say? (ST: Ancestors' ceremony.) For each single ceremony, my parents always take us to the temple. We would dress up very nice. We would cook delicious food, bring to the temple, serve to the Buddha, serve to the monk, and come home, and start to have like a family meeting, family party. My father used to be a monk. That's why, in my heart, in my brain I figured out god's only one. I do believe that. I pray every time I go to bed, but to me god's only one person that everybody calls a different name. To god, and me Buddha it doesn't make any difference. It's just one person that gives you advice to do right, that doesn't hurt other people and they won't hurt you. If somebody else hurt you, somebody else will protect you, if you are honest, and you don't hurt anybody. The way my parent brought--my father is very, very...he's very old fashioned. He does believe a lot of the religion, but one thing that I know he misbelieve, because he's too handsome that the girls all over him, that he couldn't help it. No he couldn't help it, maybe he's enjoying doing like that too, but that's not part of the religion rules for you to be cheating other. This is one thing I don't understand why my father did that, but he is a really, really honest man. He would love to help other. He has such a very big heart. He would love other. Even he is older in a whole neighbor, everybody love his name and respected him. Even now, I came to this country with my two brothers and my two sisters. They are baptized. I am the only one who is strict to the cult who believes still believe. To me, god and Buddha are the same. I go to temple. I go to church. So I don't know. You tell me. Am I a religious person or not, I don't know.

Q. And as a child, you were trained in the temple. You spent time in the temple.

A. Trained in the temple, yes. Not a lot of time. It's more like once in a while right? Like every three months or four months, something likes that. You know like...(ST: depend on each time each family...) each family, yeah, but my family more like every three months you go to the temple. Then sometimes, you, special in the mango season, or that kind of fruit season that comes when the big, big fruit come up. Big, big you know, like, how do you call the first thing of the fruit season? My parent always goes to the temple and they pick the best ones. Buy the best ones and bring to the temple to serve it. Once in a while, my mother feel like "mummy," how it's kind of be like a little bit of uncomfortable, or some even getting so sick, and we invited monks to come over to preach, to give us shower.

You know how to say, you know like holy shower. We do that, but to me I don't think you are different. The people around us do almost the same.

Q. Did you ever recognize--I mean...Did the monk or the temple, the Buddhist religion have a different relationship to men and women? Are men, little boys more involved in the temple than little girls? (Slight break in tape) Were there differences in Cambodian culture between how the religion deals with the little boys and the little girls, or it was the same you think?

A. To me, I think it's a little bit more like; they pay a little bit more attention to the religion more than little boys. It seems to me. But everybody had different opinion. But the way I brought up. If my mother cooked the food for the monks, she tells us not to touch it, because you will go to hell. We don't touch it, but my brother would take just tiny bit taste of it. He takes it out. Monk only human I guess. So the respect--I think we respect more than little boys. I don't know, maybe each family made children different. But according to my family, I think that my brother is, pay less attention than we girl, little girl. Or maybe I could be wrong, but if it's only my family only...

Q. Now what about your relationship in school? Were you a good student? What kind of subjects did you like? What did you like about school?

A. I think I like music. I like art. I'm very good in math. I don't like the dictation. I don't know why. I am very weak in dictation; I never got point for them. And a lot of thing I like. I'd exercises. I'm a little bit average class. I would be between ten to number five in a group of thirty to thirty-five student in a classroom.

Q. And you were pulled out of school early you said. You didn't go to high school and college.

A. Yes. Actually I complete...like we go to--we go from grade twelve to eleven to ten etc., until I pass. I passed grade--I come to grade seven, and I passed that. And that time you would go to college, right? High school, I'm sorry, to high school. But my mother said that's enough. In the mean time, for that...when I turned 14, I become to be a little woman. Because you know, you probably got your beauty. You look different from before. My mother seemed to be worry about--in Cambodia it's different; if some guy fall in love with you, they will follow you. You used to bike to work, and every time I come home always have somebody follow me. It's not because I'm very attractive, or anything else. I think it's just like that generation seems to be--they're like to come after you just to talk, just to know where you live. It's not a major problem, but even though my generation still so little to my parent generation, because my parent generation you wouldn't even talk to the man you didn't know.

Q. So your parents were worried that you would go to school and then you'd get pregnant.

A. Yes, yes. Not in case of get pregnant, and she probably thought when we went to school the more you know how to write love letters and send back and forth to each other, and for their name, for their respect; because it's something I did wrong. I said my parent is a very famous in the neighbor, because if I did something wrong, you are very famous, but if you did something wrong the whole neighbor would know also. That's why...(RM: Embarrassing.)...Yeah, very embarrassing to the parent.

Q. Now as you look back, what do you make of that? I mean I've heard this story now many, many times, of the parents keeping the girl from school, from reading and writing so they won't write love letters. What do you think of this now as you look back on it?

A. I don't think it's a good idea. If I had my children, I would support them. I would give them the advice, but not to try to run their life. In my generation your parent run your life. I remember I've been engaged once to the guy that I didn't in love for the first time, finally I did not in love with the guy. Finally, I felt in love with that guy. This is happen when I'm fifteen years old. I know I am finally falling in love, and all of a sudden my parent didn't get along very well. So the engagement had to broke off. We both really love each other very much, but we can't. We have no choice, because in my country you cannot live with the man your mother-in-law doesn't like you. Is that true? (ST: Yeah, it's true. I had an arranged marriage...) Yeah. So that's why I had no choice. I was broken hearted. My mother really did some--she really knows exactly how I feel. She gives me the clue to say, "You love that guy so much, and you want to run over. I would support you, but I'm not going to marry you. I'm not going to set up the marriage for you." This is the way I know how good my mother is, because I don't think most mother would do that to their daughter. You follow me? Because she know, she probably know deep down in her heart, she know how much I love that guy. But she also doesn't want to be a failure to the other couple. But the other hand, she probably knows deep down in her heart I won't regret her. I can't. So I live with the broken heart after we broke up. We cannot even stay friend, because they won't let us talk to each other. Until I turn about seventeen, my father, or my husband fall in love with me, and he arranged a marriage. I didn't even love him, and he's such a very good...

A. ...And because he accept me and my fiancé after, you know, we engaged, to go to get to know each other, like go shopping together, go buy clothes or go buy shoes, you know, we go together. But even though I don't like that guy because my heart has been given to somebody else. I'm not talking about sleeping and have intercourse, having sex with him, it's just, you know...I know my fiancé for three

months, but after that, we said after engagement, after three months, we get married. I know him for six month; I didn't even love the guy. But the thing I figured out for this life I would do everything my parent said...

Q. Why did your parents choose him for you?

A. I think to them, because he is a in a police academy, right? Police military, but he is in an academy. He is very, very good looking. He's very, very--he's a gentleman. He's very nice, very polite. One thing that my mother liked most because when my husband come to ask me, my mother told him, "my daughter is not that kind of daughter, she doesn't know how to cook," which is, I don't. "She doesn't know how to cook, so you must teach her how to take care of the money," because my mother own a little bit boutique shop. She sells mostly fabric and everything. She knows how to deal money and take care of the house. She doesn't know much about cooking, about preparing food for the husband." And my husband said that's why he go to school for, because he'd want a wife who would be dear to him, and it's not just to serve food for him. He's my mother kin, and also even one of my attachment. My mother gives me to him. And after married, I think after we had one son, I thought, you know, "I think I love him." I learn how to love him, because he loves me so much. That's why I love him.

Q. Now, we were going to talk about marriage in a minute, so let me just ask you two questions just talking about your childhood. What were your say, the...what was the happiest event in your childhood do you think?

A. Be with the parent. I, for my childhood, the most thing I happy the most is I have a very good parent, I have a very big family, and I think I can do everything I want.

Q. So you would say you had a very happy childhood.

A. Very happy, very happy, yeah.

Q. And what would you say, as you look back on your childhood, what is the saddest thing that happened to you in your childhood, do you think?

A. To see my parent, my father mistreats my mother.

Q. So that was a very sad thing.

A. Yeah. Beside, it's nothing else.

## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 2

Q. Well why don't you...(break in tape)...continue and do interview number two. And we want to ask you, well you already started to tell us how you met your husband, and we asked questions about how you met your husband, was it arranged, did you use the fortune teller, you know was it a traditional wedding, you know, things like that. You'd already begun to tell us...

A. Yeah. But mostly it's a very traditional, because it takes us two day, right? Yeah. (ST: They have one, two, and three days.) Yeah, mine take only two day, because I think the day there are the groom, bring the entire gift, and come and sit in the room, which built for the ceremony.

Q. Yeah, I didn't get that your husband was much older than you, or was he the same age?

A. He's nine years older than me.

Q. He was nine years older than you.

A. But to us, it's good for men to be older. It's not fifteen years older, but it's all right between around, between three years older to twelve years older, which is we can negotiate it. It seems to be fine. Is that right? I don't know about how the country you live on, but, you know, maybe there are different city, but I need a wedding very prompt, and that's the way they think about is by the same...

Q. So let me go back, your mother came home one day and said, "Oh, by the way, we picked out a husband for you"? How did you find out about it?

A. No. One thing my mother, she has well, a tenant house which went to many family. And my husband mother, she's a widow, and she has three kids, no, she has four children, two boys and two little girls. And one day, that I go to collect my rent, and my husband saw me and he likes fall in love at the first sight. He tried to find out that that girl is, and one of the tenant say, "Oh, you can't, because she is the landlord's daughter." And he said like, "Oh." Then he told his mother and he say like, "I really want to marry the landlord daughter." And my mother-in-law seem "she's kindly, but frighten," because compared to the class we are different because he's only my tenant and my mother-in-law mother doesn't make much money. My mother she--I'm not calling rich for my family, but you call it little bit more than middle class. Then my mother-in-law decide forget it she not going to do it, because she know my mother would say, "No." For that time, the tenant, the neighbor who know that happen, that know my mother very well, that she know my mother very nice, she not going to care so much about money. She care about how nice a person, is he good, tell my mother-in-law that it's OK, go

ahead, and "try before you give up". And my mother-in-law said, "I'm not going to try." And that person bring that toward my mother, that my husband saw me and he really want, you know, to get being serious, what will my mother say? And my mother say it's fine if they come through the, we say the rule (?), we'll take them then, but my mother said, "I won't embarrass them," she just want to know more about family history then my mother-in-law start to come. When my mother-in-law start to come, and we found out like, my father-in-law, she left my father-in-law, my father-in-law have another step wife; and she got involved with another guy which is more like boy friend and girl friend, that which is absolutely wrong for my culture to do that. But to see how handsome my husband is. He's very, very pleasant, very, very polite. My mother said, "Well, we'll try." First time she wants my husband to come every weekend, you know, just to spend time at home at my house to help my father do little bit thing, and he'd be so in for the history more, little bit. From time to time, my parent falling in love with him, because he's such as very, very sweet person.

Q. Now was that scary to you? Oh my gosh, were you thinking, or you didn't think that much about it?

A. Well, mostly I think, he's a good-looking man, but I do believe to the education, because he's been educated one thing, and he's such a gentleman. The thing is, I just don't have to question him, because I fall in love with somebody else. But, what I told myself is I don't like this guy and I cannot fight my parents. (RM: You'd have to learn...) Yeah, I have to marry him you know, one way or another...

Q. What happens to a Cambodian woman, I mean, say a marriage is arranged and you get married and you find out you can't stand your husband?

A. Then I guess it was like in here too. Yeah, you got divorce, but it's extremely difficult because then you would...It's one out of the ten that a woman, one percent, one of a hundred that a woman left man.

Q. Most women accept the marriage? Do you find most women are happy in their arranged marriage, or.

A. You cannot tell, because...I take the experience of somebody that I see day and night, like my sister. Her husband is very nice, but he also very demanding. My sister seems to take it fine, but I don't think I can take it. But maybe the way I grow up, she might grow up--I just figured out we have to be equal, even the culture like that. It's not right. And I am the one to tell my sister, "Speak up, and tell him you don't like it." But I think most of Cambodian woman, they show a lot of their feeling by the way they cry, and the way they figured out if their husband do bad thing to them, they serve them more. Like, you want to fight with your husband; you have to fight with the honesty, the sweetness. Like, no matter your

husband comes home, how late he is, to be sure his dinner is still on the table, and I hate that stuff. For each dinner you have to have the dessert for him. You sit waiting for him, and every time you come, the minute he open the door, this is the rule right, unbutton his shirt, take off, give him another thing to put it on, and sit down, and be happy, sit down until he stands. And I figure out, I told my mother, "I'm not going to do that. If you don't like it, somebody else will serve me more." But my sister would take it. She'd take it. She had four children with him. And the thing is--one thing about birth control, because we don't have much of birth control, we stop because we have children. I said, one word I said, "When you have children, you care so much about your children because any kind of children of the world need parents; and you don't want your children to go suffer to see your father live with another person. You know what I'm saying. (Voices overlap) But either way, you cannot find a perfect person. You know, nobody is perfect. My brother-in-law which is his--one thing, he is kind of little bit good to his wife, but he also very, very nice man he would give. Most women, they talk about how honesty of the men is, but he go to work, you make the money; you give the money to your wife. Each man, monthly that you give to your wife, and then she thinks you is a good man. For the sex life, I think the woman more like prefer, they would do everything their husband say. And I don't think Americans would do like that. Some people would ask for, you I don't know, you American, I been married and I figured that I learn a lot, I know a lot of American friend, and I compare my being a woman life to American life. I don't think most women would ask, even if they don't have enough sex or not. They would do when the husband feel like it.

Q. They were just, in other words, that, even sexually, they would have to please their husbands.

A. Yes

Q. So if they don't want to have sex for six months, that's no problem.

A. It's up to him. And they don't have some kind of, very few would have the romance like you would be gentle to turn a woman on first before you married, or before you go out and have sex. But some women just wait and please to him, and I figured out this is one thing that I'm very fortunate, because my husband is a very, real educated and he knew about that. I didn't know that stuff until I'd been to *Pol Pot* regime, and they share like woman talk. I figured out I was out of blue; I am one of the lucky one.

Q. What are the things the women talk about? How does a young girl learn sex education? I mean, who teaches a girl sex before she gets married?

A. No

Q. Nothing, you never heard a word of sex before you got married?

A. Do you? (Svang No. (Voices overlap) It's not--nobody is going to teach us.)

Q. So what happens, all of the sudden you get married and then here...

A. Your husbands could be a teacher.

Q. Your husband has to be the teacher?

A. That's what I'm saying. That's why most, some women that didn't know what they didn't miss. Even in some case today. Some married that live in Providence that didn't even know what it meant. That's why there are so many divorces by now. Like sometime when some American men pay some attention to her, she decides, well first of all it's only cheating, and she found out how excited, how romance it is. Some decide to get divorce, because--I think sex in Cambodia is very, very personal. But also I am one of the lucky girls that I can talk to my mother about it. I can ask her like...I miss my husband so much, you know this is after I fall in love with him, and I say, "I miss him so much, what can I do?" She cannot tell me much either, because she had no experience herself. There is only one man in her life. So, lucky that I know how to read, I would read, and. Like I say, some kind of book would help, and some kind of book would drag you down the hill (laughs).

Q. One of the things that sounds interesting, do you think that the man who has the mistress, I mean, do you think that when a man has a mistress that he has a more romantic relationship with his mistress than he does with his wife?

A. Depend on the men. Some man, they're more like, they're cheating on their wife, and the more they are nice to their first wife. This is what my father is. That's why my mother cannot say anything to him. The more--when some day he go out with one of the girl, on that day he did come back with big bag of fruit, of very nice thing for my mother. She's some kind of goddess, and very, very smart for that.

Q. Why did he do that, you think?

A. I think maybe the way he did it because of guilt.

Q. Guilt. He felt guilty about that.

A. But I figured out, he knows he feel guilty, why does he bother? It's not fair to my mother. But some man would be so that mistress more than their wife, because they figured that no matter what they do, the wife always there for him.

Q. So they take the wife for granted.

A. Yeah, and this is the way I don't like it. Mostly between nineteen seventy-three, nineteen seventy...after the war, most of the soldier who make lots of money when they become one of captain or more like, you know high class, they always have between two to three wives at least. And then those people when they are just--the first wives, always the first wife. No matter what he do, they come home he can leave home, because he know his wife, no matter what he do, is always there for him.

Q. Now one of the things too, this Cambodian culture puts such a premium on sexual purity like they say the woman should be pure when she's married, because... How do, in other words, I never hear the story of the mistress? In other words like, how does the rest of society...say that the girls that your father went out with, right, say that he had a mistress who's spending a lot of time with him, how would her community think about that?

A. She doesn't care. What she do, most people are like that. She lives in a different class from us.

Q. She had to be from a different social class you mean?

A. It does different, but even sometimes it brought conflict in very rich families. Sometimes they come, brought up in a very rich family, sometime they come, brought up in a very poor family, but those people all live in a group, those people. Mostly when you go to the bar in this country, you just want a couple drinks, to drink, for you and you go out, you get to meet people. But in my country, you go, you either have prostitute, or nice girl would please to serve you, and they probably charge the way they do--I don't know much about that. This is... How do I know about this? My brother, he's a police military, and he also very good looking, and he been involved with one of those girls.

Q. But also don't some of the men have like another wife, or they have other children with another wife, and they will spend money and.

A. Oh yes they do! After they spend more money, talk to their mistress more than their wife.

Q. And how does the community look in on it? I mean, what would...

A. Their whole living style, the community--like it's different, because she's in the community that the people that "don't care your own business, I don't care my own business." They live mostly in the apartment where you don't see each other much of her, and she didn't see much of you. Like, sometime if she comes to be a very rich mistress, you would live in a whole house that nobody even can talk to her. You don't know much of her. And the living style cannot tell much, because for that group she probably had these people, who had been through the same experience too, as a friend. But the living style is still different. You can be friend with them, because you figured out--my mother won't let me be friendly with those kinds of people or just to walk with her, because she is somebody's mistress. Those people who...There are a lot of other place like sometime had children living in, or sometime he would go back to his wife, or sometime he would support her until they grow older; but I never see any. Most people grow old together, unless his wife is a horrible woman. But most of man would go back to his wife, because the honesty and because of the--one thing that I have mind my culture is no matter how much he cheating, no matter how much he fail his wife he always go back in the end. But during that time until you suffer through the end, your wife almost die. This is what I don't like the most. But they always come back. It's just you say like a child, you let them go for just a hour until they getting tired, they come back inside. This is the way they figured out with men. But men can do that. You're a woman, cannot do that.

Q. Do you think the mistress suffers too? In what way do you think?

A. Yes. Because I think...all kind of woman has a heart. You could fall in love. And so the honesty of love--you might fall in love with the guy that never trusts you. First of all--I never put myself in that position; I never suffer that experience, but to put my position in that shoe... Of course you are mistress of somebody's, right? Maybe he fall in love with the honesty love, and maybe that guy respect you, act like you like him for money, because that's the beginning. Maybe he mistrusts her. But those women are really cried out for honesty love, like the girl that loves my brother so much. She's beautiful, a very, very attractive girl that my brother would not end up married with her because of her story, because of a story. She ends up broken heart, because that is the love. No matter what woman do, I think woman has some kind of sensitive heart, like everybody do. You can fall in love someday, some time to people, but you didn't know when. But by the time you do, that person might just stand back and say, "Wait a minute, your story is not good enough for my story." My father--my brother he cannot because of my parents' name.

Q. The mistress falls in love with someone she can't really...

A. Yeah, but mistress is always...I think the story of them very sad, because you cannot--even you have children, we call...even that guy who really not sure that child would be belong to him or not.

Q. Yes. So the children also have to grow up, they grow up as if they're really not...

A. Yeah. And it's getting worse and worse and worse. Mostly it's same for, like people on welfare. I was on welfare myself, but some people the generation on welfare. You grow up as a welfare couple, right? The children grow up, they figured out, "Why do I bother to go to school, my parent always on welfare; they survive." They do not like a bum their parent live. And they have children is more like that. And this is more like that mistress or prostitute. She grows up to see her mother is a prostitute. She figured out, "my mother used her charm to survive her living." Who does she take a copy from? Her mother. Why do I bother to go to school, why do I bother to be good, because my mother can survive, so can I. I don't know to whom, for me, when I grow up I thought my mother is the smartest person in the world, the beautiful person in the world. Nobody can compare to my mother, until now. I know she's not that pretty, she's not that attractive, but she's beautiful to me. After that--and the children will do what the parent say. Look, to me, I figured out to brought another child, you know, really responsible for the child, you turn one person to the hell. This is why I afraid to get married again, because I figured out... I am afraid because marriage in this country is not really last. (RM: You're afraid of divorce.) Yeah. I afraid of divorce and I afraid to be, why do I bother to be bitter over fourteen--my husband lost in nineteen seventy-two until now, I never had any--no, I shouldn't say that, I had a brief relationships with an American man. But first of all, it's a very, very nice, but it seems to me not worked very well because he's... Most American men are very demanding. Is that right?

Q. Demanding how, in what way?

A. A lot of ways. I mean, your business is your business, I mean, no--woman business is his business, his business is his business. O.K., but a woman business, it's like a... I don't know seem to be everything he say is mostly right. And the way they look at, to me, the way they look at Asian, they probably thought the woman who comes here to serve him all the time.

Q. True. Yeah, that could be. Yeah, sure.

A. But it's wrong, and that is why.

Q. Maybe they're disappointed because you're more like an American woman.

A. This is what I thought is why. And that's why several months ago I figured I got involved with one of the guy. I love him deeply, but I found out he's an alcoholic. I can't, excuse me.

Q. Yeah sure. (Break in tape)

Q. Now how would you describe the quality of the relationship between you and your husband? I mean, what...your Cambodian husband.

A. He's very, very nice man. He's, he's a type of guy that even I pour him a glass of water, that water would taste good. He would be very nice, but I also very good to him. I have some kind of talent that I don't think many Cambodian woman would do unbutton your husband shirt and some of them do, but some of them...I don't know you did or not to your husband, but I did, because he's more like a... My mother didn't do it to my father, but the way I did, I did more modern, because through my generation, and you read the book, you can tell. And it does--he's very good to me, but he's also cheating too.

Q. He was also cheating. Well what were you saying before again in that part? Did you say he--you would unbutton his shirt and do those kinds of things?

A. Yeah. I would waiting for him, like a, I learn how to cook after we married. I would wait for dinner with him. I would--we do a lot of nice thing together. I love him after we have one child. We get married for one year, and I got pregnant, and I have my son. For another year and a half after, no another year that I had another little girl. But he listen to me, he respected me. He cheating, but in the professional way; but I can feel it. I know my husband is cheating, but I couldn't find, you know...

Q. How did you know he was cheating?

A. I know because my husband is more like a--he talk in his sleep. And I caught that. But the other thing is I take a different way from my mother. My mother would not say anything, but she cry. But I take a different way. I would ask him questions then, I figured out if, "you tired of me, or because I had children, or because..." First thing you give him you are, how do you call, the first love, you have--man, didn't want to have like that, you know, because he is my first, the first guy I made love with; and you can tell by that, because you have that, and now, "do you want to have somebody else? Just be honest with me, because even I have one child I'm not old bag yet. I still attracted to other people that appreciate me more."

Q. Now how soon after, now you were married at nineteen, right? So how soon after did you begin to find that he was cheating, or how many years was it?

A. After I had my little girl. After I have like three year.

Q. So you were only twenty-two years old when he started cheating.

A. Yeah. Well the thing is, it because the society too. During that time we have the war. We have Khmer Rouge start to fight right on the border. And he is the police military, he have to move to another city that takes a good hour and a half ride from Phnom Penh to *Oudong* district, which is where he live. For my security, he doesn't want me to live with him over there, and so does my parent don't want me to live over there, because it's more like Khmer Rouge or *Viet Cong* would come to fight the middle of the night. You don't know what happen. And I didn't go, that's why he needed a companion, and he got it. He got it. He got the girl which is in the same position, her husband take care of the children at home. She is also police military, also when they are together it's, bingo.

Q. Were you disappointed? I mean, you were twenty-two years old, you had had this--I mean how did you feel when you found your first husband...

A. Very hurt. But one thing that I know what the other woman been through, because you see, you had two children. What more do you want to do? You want to get divorced? Your husband wouldn't want to divorce you, because deep down in his heart he loves you very much. One thing he cheating once in a while, but it's hurt, because you didn't even think about cheating your husband. That's why I'm saying, we talked, but he said he going to change, you know, he going to make up to me. (Phone rings. Break in tape.)

Q. And you understood your mother...

A. I know my position, my mother position, because I had only two children. And I...according to the education, I don't have, compared to other people, I don't have much education, but I have more than my mother. I know a real world more than my mother, and I also not afraid like my mother the way she do to my father. And, but for the children, he said he's going to change his attitude, and he going to try to make up to it.

Q. Do you think he changed?

A. I cannot say, because like, he come once in a while and he go back, and you know, just give me the money and he go back, just seem to be... Because the war also, he cannot stay with me all the time. Until--in nineteen seventy-two, one day he come over, he spent a whole week with me, which is a different attitude that I never figured out. He become such a--or become very weird, because, I think, a broken heart, a very hurt, a very pain. This is what I thinking: blame my mother. Why

don't she let me marry my other fiancé, I miss him. But I had no choice, because I marry this guy. During the time, I become very weird. I stay in a hospital. I do one in abortion, one of the last child, that he know because I don't want to... I didn't give him a very easy life either, because I give him a such a very hard time. I say, "Get out." I don't think I'm going to live with this forever, but still, the children still small. I'm going to hang on to this marriage for now. I'm not going to have any more children. I got pregnant again; it's about two months. Then I go to have an abortion. Because he knows that, and then he know what he did is just like your fool. And he comes back. He come back to me like a brand new man that I cannot imagine that he could become very, very nice to me. He spends so much time with the children and me. He spends so much time at home. That relationship last about...say a good five or six months.

Q. Did you have the abortion, or you stopped?

A. I did have it. I already have--I done it. I did my abortion, because I ask for his permission. And that's why he knows how much, because I don't think many women would do that. But I did, because I told him, I said, "I don't want to bring another child with broken family, because we had two that's enough. Because of that, he changes to be a completely nice man, like the man that I married the first time. But it did last about several months. Then he goes back on a mission again, and he disappeared.

Q. And then you never saw him again. What was that, nineteen seventy-three?

A. Nineteen seventy-three.

Q. And how were your parents? Did you tell your mother about things like that? Did she know about anything?

A. My mother, know, but like I said, some woman would take man they can do everything they want. It's O.K. for man to hitting.

Q. So your mother, what did she tell you?

A. She's been through that experience, she figured out well, what she does? She says, "I have to try on myself, right?" She's agreed with me it's allowed to get divorced, but she also disagrees with me, because no matter what, the children need a father. And I cannot just tell my children, "not to talk to your father," they have no father. And the father, who is a very nice man, would love his children very much. It's not fair to him, that because of me, I won't let him see the children. And it's not fair to the children it's not see their father. So because of that, I suffer, I sacrifice myself. Live with the anger, and let them be together. But one thing I make a stupid mistake, because I end up having abortion. And

after that, it did change him, but it cost one life. I didn't know that time I getting so angry.

Q. Why would you say it was a mistake?

A. Well, I figured out like, it's just something that I am always looking for. I figured out my two children has died in my country by starvation. If I have three, maybe one survives. This is the thing that I feel that I did a big mistake. But I think that, who know, maybe all three got killed.

Q. Now, are there any other things you want to say before we end for today? Are there any other things you want to say about your relationship with your husband before he disappeared?

A. It's a very, you know, I finally found very kind of roman moment before he left about, say about good four or five months, he's become very good husband to me. But it's just before he say good-bye, it's just something that I never forget that. It's good and bad. It's good for me because when I saw somebody have a very good life being a very nice husband, and I always picture myself to that moment, because I have very good husband for that short moment. He comes to be a very good man. He said he would change for me for good. But I don't know for good for disappear like that.

Q. So, for the few months before he disappeared, he was a very good husband?

A. Very good husband. But some how right now, when I miss my husband so much, I figured out the way he did to me, the way he cheating me, which is make me care less about him. Which is...I have a lot of thing that I lie to myself, I be honest to myself, but myself I think--abuse myself, I also pay so much attention to my--so much in a lot of way. When I feel lonesome, I feel so lonely, and this what I figured out: He probably here somewhere, and I going to see him someday. But when sometime I feel like normal, I feel fine; I figured that he's gone. He went for good. And even though he's alive he's not going to be able to waiting for me or for me to waiting for him. And besides, he's a very good-looking man, I mean he always have somebody who after him. So I...I don't know. One thing that I cannot give you that answer that why do I--I love my husband very much, and I also hate him too. I never forgive him the way he cheating me. No, I never forgive that. I forgive, I never forget.

Q. Now you think that it's hard for you to accept this loss because, you know, one part of you loved him; another part of you hated him. I mean, do you feel...I mean say if he appears tomorrow, do you, what do you, I mean, how do you feel about that?

A. Obviously depend by the situation, if he's available man, yeah I would love to be with him, O.K., and start to praise moonlight, but this is start to be here in the United States not in Cambodia. O.K.? Which is we are equal. But even if I met him today and he's married, I been live without him for so long, I survive. Let somebody else have him. But in a nice way, at least I can tell him about children that are died. I will tell him how much they grow, how my little girl look just like me, and my little boy look just like him, and the attitude is about exactly the same. I will tell him all that. I don't think I really crazy about to looking for my husband right now, because even I know he's now, he had two problems that nobody can fix. He's a gambler. But he's a very good husband to me because I have money to support myself too. If somebody who doesn't have enough money to support themselves, my husband which is a very...I don't know how to say, he's made good money, but he spent so much money with gambling. According to say I love him--I know he love me. He give me money because he knew I would be the type of person would come after him or go to the captain, or go to his boss to tell them, "Give me the money because I have two children to taking care of." And not many women would do that, and I would do it. The reason he does, because I not afraid to embarrass him, if he comes to the point he's very bad; or the point maybe he love me too. He loves me, he love children too, but he cannot help himself. He's a very dangerous gambler. Besides I didn't live with him, since he live in *Oudong* District. *Oudong Mean Chey* is the small city that everybody gamble, everybody, and I hate that city. Everybody, even teenager knows how to gamble. And it's that the point is very bad point for him. He was born into a poor family, and he doesn't have much freedom to do much of other child could do. And when he's grow up, he has to support his mother, and by the time he's ready to get married, he has to support the children. He also, of course, never had time to support himself. He never had time for being himself. This is one thing I think about the culture, my culture, one thing that I don't like, because from one after another you have to do something for somebody else, but not for yourself. In this country you can go to school, you have time for yourself. You live out with your parent, you move away from your parent, you can be in yourself. You can get to know yourself. In my generation or my husband generation, you never had time to get to know yourself. Never mind, about somebody else, but yourself, you never had time to get to know yourself. I got to know myself lately, because I know I'm very independent woman. I always work very hard with what I wanted, always got what I want, but I have to work for--I mean I didn't have much of any support, but every penny and every cent I earn in this country I work for. So does that answer your question?

Q. Yes, it does. Well, tell me, did you want to say anything, or just...I think we're coming to the end of this tape, and do you want to, do you have any questions? We have a few more, another ten more minutes did you want to ask anything? (ST: No.) Usually in these interviews Svang does all the interviews, but today I got...

A. Next time you want to do in Cambodia, I will come too. You know, it's just tell you something to talk. (Voices overlap)...(laughter)

Q. It's a rare opportunity for me to...I've listened to, maybe, a hundred and forty hours of interviews in Khmer. So this is a rare opportunity for me to hear the whole thing...(SP: Laughs). I' m very patient. I sit there and I listen, I don't know...

A. That's good. You know Cambodian is not such a very difficult language to learn. I also teach my doctor little by little, just to say, "How be you," or, "It's hurt." little by little.

## INTERVIEW 9-PART 3

Q. ...On September sixteenth, nineteen eighty-nine. And Dr. Richard Mollica and Svang Tor are interviewing "SP". So today, the focus of this interview--the first couple of interviews were on your childhood experience, and the focus of the next few interviews have to do more with the experiences that you underwent under the communists. And then after that, then we'll talk about your experiences in the United States. So, you know, we try to go from, like...

A. The past.)

Q. From when you're born to like to weeks ago.

A. Yes, to the future. I mean, the past to present.

Q. So today we'll totally focus this interview on your experiences under the *Pol Pot* regime. So the first question we started out with usually is that when the communists took over your country in nineteen seventy-five, what happened to you, your family, what happened to the people--you know, if you could just sort of give us, tell us your story of your experience under the communists.

A. Well, the big changes in Phnom Penh, I live in Phnom Penh in (Recalls to herself in a low voice) January, February, March, April...April the seventeenth, right? I think communists took over Phnom Penh. On that time I live in a home with my whole family like my brother, my five brothers, and my sister, my five sisters, and my two children...everybody at home. And all of the sudden we thought the city got freedom, right, we thought that they said we found peace, but the opposite way, around nine or ten o'clock they start to tell us to move out from our home. It's not just me, everybody in the neighborhood start to pack up and carry some stuff. I'm kind of a little bit hectic; because from experience I've been through I lost my husband and just start to put my life together. And now it's time for me to lost the home that I love very much, but I have no choice I have to follow my family. And that time I just put myself together, and I also very weak, and very sick, because on that time I'm still under the doctor taking care, like you know, I have to give myself a lot of injection, a lot of I. V. (says something to Svang in Khmer), yeah I. V. like once a day to put myself together. Not because with other treatment...I have to leave everything, in fact go with my family. From the day one to day two it's been getting tougher and tougher, because I used to have very nice big home that we got everything, and come to the corner here you are sleep on the ground, sleep on the grass and under the big tree. You drink all kind of water that you can't buy, and see everybody's around you, see somebody die on the street. You see so many people who got killed from the war during the fighting. It's a lot of thing that...it's just something I could figured out that nobody, not just me, nobody could figured out would be happened like that. And it's so rude for

the soldier come over point the gun to us to leave home as soon as possible; we don't have to take anything, we will return tomorrow or next week. We take their word, but we have no choice, we have to go.

Here I am, my brother he had a big motorcycle, and my father had a big motorcycle also, and I have a motorcycle from my husband; so we got three motorcycle and two bicycle to put all this stuff in there, and just let the children sit, you know, because we are old enough to walk. From time to time my father just tell us, "I don't think they will let me come back, because their attitude is so rude." We saw some people got killed right in front of us from, you know, try to fight back to go back to their home. It just seems to be like we had no way to go back home. This is something in my thought, I said, "That's it. This is good-bye home." So we have to, we keep going. And we move to--we go towards my father hometown that he lives in a farm. We go over there. Take us--it's normally takes us one hour to drive by the motorcycle, or by the car take us about a half hour. It take us a whole day...oh no, a whole day, a whole three day to go over there, because we have to go in a circle, because a lot of places they been closed not to go. By the time we go into the--my father hometown they wouldn't let us stay in the way he wanted, because my father, he's in a story that he's...to them he, my father, they thought he's in a higher class like rich, but he's not, and beside we carry a bad story because I am a soldier husband and so does my brother. So they keep after my brother and me, because I have two children with my husband, which is a soldier child. At that time I have to lie to them that it wasn't true, because--my husband is never been a soldier, he is just a cab driver just do something stupid. You know what I'm saying? Just, he's not very educated, he's just a uneducated people such and such, but we cannot hide, because we go back to the country that...Everybody knew very much about my family. So we live over there for five or six month. Then we decided to move, because one way or another me oh my brother would got killed; because my husband story, because me, or because my brother. One day we woke up, and I tell my parent I have to go, because I don't want to die in this, you know, in this country. He said like, "Anywhere we go, we go together," because my father, he loves my two children very much. And so does, you know, everybody, but it's just an excuse for him. We want him to stay where he were, because we can tell it's a very nice and safe place for him. He know everybody, and also everybody respected him, except me and my brother, it's no way that we can fit in there.

Q. When you were staying in this country town, where are you.

A. What town are we in? In a small--it's a hometown of my brother, countryside.

Q. And where were you staying? Were you staying in one of your houses there, or

A. No.

Q. What was it like for you there, I mean in that...before you decided to...

A. The life is so different, because they would tell us to stay where they want us to stay. Imagine this, in a big house with twelve rooms. They put us to live in the barn. It's just, you know, the barn. We are sixteen people. My mother had eleven children, my two niece and two...sixteen people live in one barn, we live in the barns, because this is the way they punish us. We used to live in big house. Now this is the barn that we have to stay, we have no choice. And the lady who owned the barn is really happy about, because we are such a big family. And what my father did, and my mother did, and she put like a...(Speaks to Svang in Khmer. Svang: Straw.) Straw yeah. We take all the straws and put on the grass. The elder like me, my brother, and my sister will sleep on the ground, you know, on top of the straw, but so does my parent. The younger children, like my children, my sister children, or my little brother, my little sister, he make a, like a small bed for them just to fit in. My brother who is old enough, who would sleep in a swell, you know like the...do you want to explain? (ST: Hammock.) He could sleep in the Hammock, yeah under the tree. But some nights it's a very, very rain, heavy rain we all come together, we couldn't sleep. One thing they feel homesick very bad. The other thing is feel so uncomfortable to sleep in the place smell very bad, and it just disgusting. The children would know what going on. My children keep asking, "Why are we coming here?" And I used to have the guy who delivered the bread, fresh bread for them every morning, they say, "What happened with my bread? What happened with the television tonight?" I mean compared to my family, it's not many, at that time not many family who have television, or who have refrigerator. In my house it seems to be we have everything out there. The children got so used to it. I kept telling them that they be not live home anymore. This is the place we going to stay, and we might go back home soon, or we might not. And they said, "Why, how come? Where is the good food? Why do we have to eat this?" I mean instead cook four or five different kind of food a time, this time we cook in a big pot that's easy for us, because no way, we cannot use the money. We exchange the gold for the food. And anything that we can make, or we just to be sure to make enough for everybody, cares less about how, the flavor. And I just feel so sorry for the most like the, my two children and my younger sister are grow together. They are one year after another, older than the other. And they are the most suffer, and they couldn't figure out why they cannot have food after lunch. It's just a sad thing, one after another for the children. And they keep ask, I mean...And during that time they have a special, stupid class that you have to go to have the meeting every week--every night just to be sure like you become to be a communist, to learn more about communist reason. And during that time I just heart broken, because sometime I would be fainted because I'm not feel very well. The other thing I don't have enough good food to eat, and the other thing, I never been so worked so hard being like a farmer. It's just every morning that they ask me--thanks god that most people they get up very early to dig the canal. Leave home at four o'clock in

the morning, and come back home ten o'clock at night. Because I'm not a very good, in a good condition, they let me go to work at ten o'clock, stay with my family, cook for them with my little children, and come back to work. It's more like the hour like I work from ten to twelve o'clock, come home and cook and go back from one till five or seven o'clock, and come home. And my children never are without me, and at that time they are only four years old. The other one is five years old. They couldn't figure out, "Mom, why you have to go? You never leave me alone." Even the answer you give to them, you getting so angry, I getting so angry. First of all I feel so sorry for them. It comes to the point where you don't have enough sleep. You don't have enough food. You lost your patience. I think it as sometime explain to them what going on, the same thing everyday. You getting kind of angry, it's a, you know, "shut up," or something like that. I mean, who want to be like that? And after that I feel so sorry for them, because they don't know. Most of the time I come home, I can...everybody in the family face you can see. It's just feels so--you can see the some body the way that they...they used to be somebody. Now they treat us like...it's not animal, not like animal, like nothing. They would give more credit to the animal, like they would say it's better than you are. You know, they say like, they rather to save the cow instead of save you, because the cow would do a lot of thing to the regime, to the group, but you cannot do nothing. It's O.K. for you to die. They probably save food for somebody else, but they don't want you to be here. I mean, what do they get? They have no gain, because you not working very much. So from time to time, during that time I go to work, it's just to, you know, when they dry the rice after they take from the farm? They dry the rice, and before they put in a machine, so I have to put them in a big heavy bag, you know, and I have--be sure. Instead of ask me to do like from time to time they think that I'm doing so slow, that they give me the limit, like a hundred pounds of bag--how many bag that I suppose--I have to fill it up. If I cannot fill it up, I cannot go home. And this is the time that I have to force myself to work. Excuse me. (Breaks in tape) I have to force myself to work twice more, because one thing, I want to be with my children, and the other thing, I am the only one would cook for the other children or the other adult in my family who old enough to go to work. They would set you up to work when you are stop, and you have eighteen years old and you go to work. But when you are less than twelve years old have to go to work in this separated group. The littler, smaller than that like, they call children group. Start from seven to twelve years old, they have special group. Those children would go to learn how to be a good communist, how to tell them that you father and your parent doesn't mean anything to you. You have to obey the rule, you have to...do everything to be a good communist. You have to be strong. You work very hard, you don't need any education. After, from you're older than twelve years old up to eighteen years old, they put you in a different group, and then you work as hard as adult, but in the mean time you have a lot of meeting. They ask my brother and my sister when I was there. And upward from eighteen, my sister, which is, she's two year younger than me, she lie to them because she want to be with my

parents. She told them that she was married, and her husband separated, and this gives her a chance to be with my mother. They would ask her to go to work. The thing that we would never, never do--my mother, she has some experience form that before, but none of anybody in you know, in her children, because like me, I had nothing. I didn't know the rice treat. I didn't know. I didn't know what kind of the rice--how the rice came from. I know the rice came from--what, how to look like, but I don't know how to grow them. I never know how to take care of them. I never know how to do everything, a lot of thing by hand, because I rise in Phnom Penh. Every time that we have big dinner, it just seem to be like we see the food that it's just--we wouldn't give to the dog, if we live in our home, because the food is just...Everything just fill up to be full and go to sleep. From time to time my mother, she's a very, very funny lady, she has lots of sense of humor, her sense of humor start to laugh. First of all she try to cheer us up, tell us stories, and such and such. And from time to time her sense of humor getting weaker and weaker, and so do I just not, start to lose interest in anything around. Care more about the children only, and that's why one day I told my mother--and beside the spy keep after my brother and me. We live over there for three months. Then one day that we woke up, I tell my parent I have to go. My mother says, "Where?" I say, "To *Battambang*," the way that we have our mind to escape to Thailand. And my father, he said like...The best place for him is there, but it's not best for us, because we cannot live like that. So we decide to move. On that time, we have a lot of people who move out from that city also.

From that time we move over there by boat. The sad thing is--the country, my father homeland is, we call *Koh Kong*. The boat is, we have to go through *Battambang*, and so we have to go across Phnom Penh. It's torn my heart. When I saw Phnom Penh, it looked like the ghost town. It's nobody. From the boat that I can see through, and my children, they recognize there, they say, "There home!" They don't know about home, but they see, like the, you know, the palace, you know, from the boat. "Why don't we go home? Why don't we stop?" And we can't. They take us to another city called *Maung*. Which is close to, both are close to *Battambang*. That's not the way we want. We thought they let us go where we want to, but they're lying. But you know it's not the way we want. They stop by at *Maung*, and they dry us to...no, we--further on they put us in *Kampong Chhnang*, which is not too far from Phnom Penh. We stay over there for two or three nights. That is the first experience I have very, very difficult because at that time I'm mostly very, very attractive. I have beautiful long hair; I mean my size is just perfect for that condition. And many soldiers would have their eye on me. My food is start to go low, because my mother starts to exchange, and the gold start to give up because we have such a big family. One day I opened the door and I saw the soldier stay in the house. I asked him to get some food from the people who left home because--like my condition too, when you left home you didn't get anything, just the clothes because you thought you could buy food. That's happened everywhere. And I go, and I ask them like, you know they have like the pickled fish that you can cook for long time. Here I am, go over

there...and they ask, they say if I let them kiss me, they would give me everything I want. With that kind of people if I saw them during the street, I wouldn't even look at them. You know, because they are very good-looking, very... I don't know, it's just some personality, but this is I have to, because I have like fifteen people who waiting. They not all depend on me, but we have to try to find everything to help each other. I go over there, so OK, I let them kiss me, but I say, "OK I will let you kiss me, but just kiss, but let me go through that to get what I want first." In a big pile of, big tank full of the fish that they, you know, they make pickled fish. Here I am so excited to pick up without the spoon, without the fork, I do by hand. And you know all the bonefish it's sharp me, I didn't feel it, because I want to take it so much I can. I take a lot until I feel so heavy that I cannot take it. And I let him kiss me. Then he says, "If you let me sleep with you, I will give you a bag of rice. I said, "no, because I have a bag of rice. And I did lie to him. I say, "I will think about it." I took pickle fishes this come to my father. And I can see the anger on my brother and my father face, that they probably got the idea I might slept with that guy; oh, I have to do something to exchange that. I told them, I said, "No, I didn't do anything. They just kiss my hand, because, you know, that's all they do and I asked them to do." At that time I start to wash my hand, and after you take all the soil out the bleed start to come because it's sharp. Our whole hand it feel so sore and so hurt. I can see my mother, and my family feel that I am the one in the family never work very hard, and here I am the one that used my beauty and.not to sleep around, but to, I have some talent that I can talk. I'm very good talk to anybody which is, you know, like that--want to be enemy would become to be friend. I did, but my father, he did try to tell me that no matter what you do, I don't want you to go through this. I said, "Dad, I didn't do anything. He's only kissed my hand, that's it." My hand start to get swollen, and for about seven, eight o'clock the same guy come over again. And he told me he had a lot of sugar. He said, "I have a lot of sugar. You can take many you want, but you have to go back to that house to take that sugar." I look at fifteen people who depend on me, if I can the sugar for them, or should I sleep with that guy. How about I'm unlucky, I might get pregnant? For the tough condition I tell him, I say like, "I would want it's just a glass of sugar, but I would let you kiss me again; but you cannot sleep with me because I have my period. He say oh, he doesn't care even I have my period. He will sleep with me anyway, and I said, "No. No, that's out of the question. You can kiss me, or you cannot kiss me and the sugar will be gone anyway." O.K. for the tough condition, O.K., he would kiss me again, and what I do, I go get the sugar. Thanks god I got the sugar I want for my parent.

Come back in the morning over--they come to collect, because my brother, he has very good-looking motorcycle. They took his, because they said, like, the soldier needs it for the country. Even they don't have to say it, we have to give it to them anyway. Then...they took off two motorcycles and two bicycle left. Then, we had to go in a car to come to *Maung*, the city named *Maung*. We cannot take the bicycle with us, but I begged the driver of the car just to have one

for my, you know, for my children to ride on. And he did. So we lost all the motorcycles, there is only one of left. Here we come on the same car that we sit for one big trip about almost thirty people. And the action of the way you can see everywhere you turn, you can see people die on the street. You see people got killed. You see somebody got raped. You see children lost their parent and cry. You see all kind of thing. And I hold tight to my family, and my children, at least I still have them. In the car away from that soldier the truck driver tried to pick me up again, because I sit next to him. And my father seems to be like--I don't know how you feel when you have the children. You see somebody look down at your children, and it just--I can see he bite his tongue, and he's so angry but we cannot do anything. They treat us like dirt. But I keep tell them, I said like, I can't because I--you know, I make all kinds of excuse. He said if I do he probably take me exactly where I want, which is--even though it's not true. So I figured, "No. You can take me anywhere as long I'm with my family." So they drop us--we take the ride for about a good eight-hour. We got a ride in *Maung*. We stay over there, then my father is getting so angry he come with the big scissors, and say, "I have to cut your hair, because some really thought I looked more like a movie star this way." I did cut--my father did have to cut my hair to save, you know, from the rape and everything. And he did. From that point they both smoke, my brother and my father, they both smoke, and they wanted the cigarette. And you cannot buy. For my father, I figured out if I ask him, he wouldn't let me know. So after dinner, everybody go to bed, I decided to go to ask the soldier, you know, "Can I have some cigarette for my father?" He seems to be nice. He's turn around and say, "For your father?" I say, "Yeah." He say, "It for your husband?" And I say, "No. It's for my father." And, "Where's your husband?" And I start to tell him, "Oh, he's hurt me so bad. He left with another girl friend, and he's, you know, he's always drunk." Something likes that, and they give me a pack of cigarettes. And I give to my father, and I know if I give to him, I have to explain, go through a lot explanation. I go to my brother to give to him, and my brother, he smoke also, and we both share. And my brother, we both lie to him that he asked that soldier to have it. In the middle of conversation the soldier come back to me again. He come on very strong to me, because...All those soldiers, I think he separated from his wife for so long, and any woman that they can take their hand on they would more like a pig. At that time I told them the truth, I told them, I say, "I'm sorry I'm lie, this is my husband." I told my brother is my husband. I say like, you know, "because I want a cigarette from you so much..." and such and such. I keep lying. I am getting from lie to another. In that time the night is comes, so everybody go to bed. I keep see the darkness that surround myself, to see you, here I am sleep in another pig barn that they took all the pig away. You know, you sleep in there. Luckily is not rain.

Until a day--the morning come, they took to another country. We take a walk about three day to get to that country with amount mud about this high. Then we start to give up something that is very heavy, but we are sure we got food. We start to throw out some more clothes, more pillows, and more--some

nice stuff we have to throw it out, because we cannot take it with us. We take it by hand. During that time, the middle of the road some soldier come over, saw my father motorcycle, and they asked, they say like, "I want that." But my father says, "This is for my two children sit." The children of the communists would do anything. He's tough. "If you don't give it to me, you will have the rest of your life!" Is that meaning you will kill him? So we had to let it go. So we throw a lot of clothes, what we have left it's just the food and a few piece of clothes that my mother, you know, carry, and some gold that we been hiding.

So days go by until we find a place that they ask us to stay. It's--I don't know when they told me here or where you have to start your life from now on here. I look everywhere, all tree are bigger than my size, about this big, and you see everywhere seem to be all are younger. And it's not just everybody's around me or me, it just we be the same, we don't know what to do. We have nothing to do. Luckily my father, he had an ash, you know, like a, you know a (Speaks in Khmer to Svang). And we don't have any sore. We don't have anything to put the plug in, nothing! In this condition we stay in old, old temple for two day, until they find a place for us to stay, to build a small home. Since the soldier is--if I live by myself, he build a home for me. It's not home, you know, like a small house for me. But if I live with my parent, they won't build for me, because I have two brother who also very sick. But they count as the brother. It's actually human being; he has to do it. And I, no way I can be separate from my father. And I say, "No, I'm going to live with my parents." From that time, my father and me, we almost start to build a house. We cut the entire small tree, you know. To build the house my father has to build the--it doesn't matter, you don't need to be the builder to build a house, you know, or carpenter to do the house. You just do it. I mean, everybody could do it, because they have so many tree and so many thing that you can tie up together. But here my father, he sixty-eight years old...I know everybody in the family are heartbroken, but in the tough condition, we have to do. My sister, she's more like stronger than me, but in the way she's also... She wouldn't let anybody say any bad thing that she doesn't like. She wouldn't take any, you know, from any that jerk. But I would take it, because she's never married, and I figured I been married and maybe just to exchange the act a little bit to get the food for my family, you know, long I don't have to sleep with them I have nothing to lose. On that time my mother's, you know, beautiful skirt that I really made from silk. They name me the "silk skirt girl," because I always used to ask from house to house, during that time before they put us to work, to find some more vegetables, to find some more rice, to find some more food, to find any kind of thing that I can think of for my family. First of all, everybody thought I would be the one who die, one of three, because I don't have any care from the doctor; I cannot take the medicine. I almost, you know, black out all the time, and then I feel kind of stress. Come to this point, I don't know. Maybe god put me in to this. It's just out of the blue I become very strong. And I think, like, family needs help. And I do it. I go from house to house. To some people the really, sometime they give me the food, and after that they say they hated me after. This

is the thing that I got gift from my parent about god. And I can talk to them until they give it to me. And they feel sorry after, but it's too late, I already got what I want. From that point I got a lot of soldier who come to support. Not for food, but it just to talk. They're in two ways. One because my beauty, the other one is for to searching who I am, because I been told my husband die during the fighting, and he is a cab driver, taxi driver. And they don't believe that. And to see the...well, even the clothes you have, you can tell it different of the quality of the clothes. And the way you act, it's absolutely different. On that time, by the time I build the home, my father builds a little (Speaks in Khmer to Svang. Svang: Hut.) Hut. By the time he be finished they live in the big hut about--it's about this size, from here to here. It's long about from here to the porch. That's the place we are going to sleep, sleep in there, not everything in there. You'd sleep in the same floor. My father would build about this high from the ground (demonstrates), because, you know, get away from the bug and the cold. We live over there for four or five days, and then they start to put us to work, to work very hard. I would work, they call, with the group, and so does my sister. She, you know, she's with the group also, because she wanted to be with me. My parent, my mother, they would call older group. She works in a different group for the older people. My children would be with me sometime, but...Oh, my father, he takes of the children at home, and also he has to do something for the older guy. Everybody, all age have to work.

From that time, or two or three month my littlest daughter start to get very, very sick. She had diarrhea. Here I am, luckily that I have the soldier that would have across on me or what, I don't know, would come to visit me--and begging him anything just to get the medicine for my children. On that time he did give me penicillin. I don't think it would heal, but it better than nothing. And I give it to her. Her condition is getting weaker and weaker. The food getting lower and lower. So does myself getting weaker and weaker. To watch my daughter, it's start to...you know she more like go thin--not thinner. She misses her home, she misses her toys, she miss her food, and she start to complain and talk day and night all the time. Somebody told me to burn marijuana, put in a sugar to make her sleep, not to talk too much. They'd give it to her. It does help. To me, until now I think I blame myself for that. Maybe I give her too much. She sleeps, and one day I woke up, and she just getting so soft and just couldn't say anything. The diarrhea is still on, the food's not being--we still had some food left for her to eat, but she couldn't eat. She still want her bread, she still want her toy. Everything is start to getting less and less. One day when I--on that time I asked my mother to take care of her, you know, instead of go to work. I go to work and work for two. It's for my mother and for myself, because I won't have to take care of my little girl. And I go not to far from her, like from here to the corner, and I heard my mother call me. I come over. Here my daughter, she is gone. It just...I don't know how to say, because I saw everybody in my family had come, and that time we just shock. She one of the girl would, the bride family would laugh or cry. She just died, her eye open. She's not completely died when I come over and hold

her. She looks at my face, and she love to touch my breast. Before she put it--before she lie down, she's gone. (Crying while she is retelling this) My father, my brother want to cry, but they have no chance. My father run over here so does my brother. My sister, my little sister and my son didn't know what going on. And they come back from the back garden with a beautiful flower and say, "Here for her. She'll probably feel better to see this flower." She's gone. That night I hold my daughter body. Our whole family is very, very quiet. Nobody wants to say anything. She is the first person who dies in the family, starting from her. I saw my father start to change his attitude, like instead of make some kind of joke he lost his sense of humor; also because after my husband lost, he's very, very close to her.

(Still crying) We did not even have wood to make coffin for her, so I just use a piece of skirt that I have, wrap her up. Then I figured out, well, I lost my husband, I lost my home, now I lost my little girl, but at least I still have my son, my mother, my whole family. She is gone. That is for good, because we don't know how much we have to go through for the starvation, to work like a dog like this. We don't know. So I figured out, well, life has to go on. And I bite my tongue; I said to my mother, I say, "It's good for her. She's lucky. She doesn't have to suffer like us. She's gone for good. At least she has somebody to bury her. How about us?" My mother looks at me like she thought that I don't have the mother heart at all. She said, "Don't you care about your daughter?" I say, "What more can I do. I have another son to taking care of. I have you. I have other family." And look at this. When we left home, I am the weakest person in the whole family. I don't know what got in to me. I just have some attitude that--it just more like a man. But I have to fight for that. And my mother looks at me, and she says, "O.K. You're right, but I can see even you say that, you lie to us. You miss her very much." She's the younger; she's the baby of the family. Time to time, after that, two months after my niece, how do you say, but my little girl, she's not swollen. She just had diarrhea, and getting weaker and weaker and weaker. Why I still live with myself right now, yet didn't give her right amount of marijuana she couldn't die, but she cannot survive anyway, she had no medicine. My little sister, she's the opposite. She starts swollen. Her body looks like a balloon. The thing is we don't have sweet thing to eat. We don't have salt. We have to exchange everything for salt. You know the food we eat, it just no flavor. Just eat. From that time...on that day my mother, my sister, and me worked together and my little brother come over, "Come home quick!" When we see somebody come to call us while we're in work, we know something danger probably happened, we go over there. My sister older, my older sister daughter died. So we fight for that moment sometimes twice a month, sometime once a week. Everybody start to get die one after another. My sister, she lives in *Battambang*, she had four children, but they're not close to my two, like my two children and my younger sister because they live together. They love each other as a friend. You know, but they're not really close. I can see my youngest brother, or my youngest sister and my son, every time we mention about my little girl,

"What happened with her? Why you put her away?" And day-by-day, one day I heard my father--it just he, I don't think he can take it. He just out of the blue he choked and he cried and nobody can stop him. And after that he becomes ill.

My brother, he doesn't care about to go to help for food anymore, he want to die also. It seem to be everybody, like everybody work like a dog, work very hard. In the morning you left home at four o'clock, you come home to eat, and you go back again at two o'clock. No, you come home at eleven o'clock, you eat and go back to work from one to five o'clock, and come and go back again from seven to eleven o'clock. You work three times a day, but you don't have enough food to eat. They would give you, at that time they would give you the limit of rice depend on how many family do you have. Even though the rice is just not enough for us, they give us, like, a small cup of rice for each person. On that time my father, my brother figure out...we thought... I feel guilty the most because I am the one who made my father move from his hometown to here. I thought we could go to *Battambang*. This is not *Battambang*, way, way different from *Battambang*. Because at *Battambang*, at least we still have something to eat. Over here we don't have anything to--nothing to eat, plus we have to work very hard. Most of the people over there, they are uneducated at all. Most of the guy who is the leader, they didn't even know how to write their own name. They didn't even know what the ice made from. They didn't even know--they never see the motorcycle. They never see the car. They never saw the airplane; they probably thought it's a bird. It's just poor, uneducated people who was--that they train you to be more like a robot, would do everything that you set him to do. Come to the point my father, my brother give up. He said like, O.K. now to tell them the truth that he is a police military, maybe they would send him back to Phnom Penh. But on that time, we saw somebody who does the same thing too. They got killed. So my mother said, "So what. Don't do it."

And here I am, I cannot go ask anybody for food anymore during my lunchtime, because the soldier start to after me, and getting a lot of jealousy from his wife. O.K. And the food condition is getting poor. Everything we brought, we cannot use it, because we have to ask the group to agree for us to cook that, and it just a stupid idea for us to make things so complicated. From time to time I don't remember which one of my niece or my nephew died first, but they all start to die one after another. I remember my sister die after her children heart broken and no food to eat. Then my youngest, to me my younger sister, she more likes a daughter to me because she's a very close age to my daughter. She died also from diarrhea. One thing that break my heart so much, during that time I'm not feel very good I asked them to stay home with my son. Here I play around with the son, and we saw all birds fly on the sky. My son asked about, "Do you see my sister tell her " I miss you". And tell my aunt," my youngest sister, "I miss her also. Mom, where are they? I miss them so much." They don't know what die is. I hold my son so tight. I asked to god, "Please let me die together, because I don't want to die before him." After that, about two or three day's start a high temperature and the food start to run--we don't have any more food. Then I start

to--on that day we have no food, no sugar. They had lot of sugar cane from the other farm that they have it. Time by time I go to steal that for my son. I have a lot of big cut, because I have no experience from stealing, but you know, like the sugar cane am very sharp. I cut all over my place, and in the morning I go to work, they know I have been stealing, because... I told one of the soldiers the truth; I said like, "I steal them. I have only one son, and now he is a very, very sick kid. He needs sugar. He wants just a teaspoon of rice. He want to eat and I have nothing for him." And that guy look at my finger, and he say like, "Give me that ring, I will give you rice." I exchange my wedding ring for a can of rice, but it worth it, because for my son. And he also tell me he going to ask the leader to let me stay home to cook rice, to be with my son. On that day there are my mother, my father, and I'm cook rice. The rice about to cook when my mother say, "Hurry up. Come here!" Son died. The rice started to cook. My son didn't get a chance to eat it! And he died. I just stopped in the middle, "He's the only one left." And I look at my mother and say, "It cannot be right, the rice is not cooked yet! It's almost cooked!" And she just, "You have to let him go." So there is nothing else for me... I cannot say to anybody. I just walk out. And I don't believe he's die, because... Everybody in my family die with his or her eye opened. They are looking for--they waiting for something to eat. They die by starvation. Really just... I come back, I walk around, and I don't know how long that I been running, and I come back. My brother--I cannot do to his body, so this time my brother has to do it. I can to see the face of my younger brother. He is so happy to see I cook rice, that he got a chance to eat it instead of my son. My youngest brother, that he just--he have very, very big infection from, he fell on something and the infection getting very big and bigger. He cannot walk. Then everybody cry and sad, and he steal the rice to eat. But it just like to him, he so glad that my son died, that he got a chance to eat. At that time, I probably feel hurt, but for a moment. And after that, before you know, everybody would want something to eat.

Here I am, start to do something for son. I don't know how the mother in the world would do it, to keep seeing your children suffer day-by-day, day-by-day. It's what I been through. Until I got something, here I cook and I prepare just enough food for him, because I know he not going to live any longer. At least he got what he wants. I got the sugar cane that he wants, I grind them, and I just take just the juice for him. I cooked the rice, and I thought that least he has something to eat before he's--he could die. I know he would die someday, but not going to be that soon. Then my father--and my brother decide to put the body away. He did. I had nothing. I don't know how I feel. I feel like a piece of thing that slow, has no place to go. I feel so empty. I feel like the world is so disgusted to watch. It's so innocent. When I lost my little girl, I had my son, and would sing for me, he would play with me. Sometime he would ask me a lot of thing, and he would ...he's such a...he reminds me a lot of my husband. His attitude is more like him. The thing that I miss is he's so little, but he's so full of energy and love. But he also loves to eat. Four or five months before he's died, he's very active. He run

away, and I think somebody give him food, like a cucumber or fruit. He come back without showing his grandmother, he show to me and says, "Ma, this is just you and me. Don't let anybody see it." Because he knew everything we have, we have to share. And he never got a chance to eat anything he's want. And everybody notice, and I look at my mother, and I said like, I told him about if you make a joke of it, because we had to share, the family. Come to the point I say, "You eat them." I had to separate, slice them into, you know, how many people in the place. No matter how everybody got it, you have to share to him or her. But I give him my piece. But he wouldn't eat it. He said, "That's all mine." I said, "Eat it" "It's all mine!" I said, "But everybody give it to you too." It's come back. I give him my piece. He still so angry, but He have to eat it anyway. At this point, when I cook the rice, I said that to him before he dies, I say, "This is going to be all yours, O.K.? I won't let anybody eat it. You're going to eat it all by yourself, O.K.?" And he responds, "Yes." And I told him, I say, "I'm not going to let anybody eat it." I have to close my eye; I do this for my son only. It's the last chance. He didn't get a chance to eat that.

We put the body away. Then I had no children anymore. Then they probably call me, it's a very...special group, so I have to work with a young adult, you know, like single group, which have no children. At that time I knew the family who knew my family in Phnom Penh very well (sniffing). That girl didn't help much. She tells me about my husband story. She told them about all kind of things. Here the soldier after me again. They separate me away from my family, my family again. I have to be in a group of the family that has the story of--a group of the girl that has the story of the prostitute, mistress, or soldier wife. You have to work twice hard. Everything you do, every action you do, you have to be careful, because, otherwise you probably got killed, just like that. But thanks god I still not live away from home from my parent. On that night, the older soldier, he's really old and very, very ugly, come to me and ask me, "Do you want some rice?" I say, "Yeah, I like very much to have some rice." "I have a big pot of rice in my place. Do you want to go to take it?" I got some feeling, I knew if I go, I might get rape, or might get something, but I saw people did that already. But I ask--I just...ask to god. I said, like, "What should I do? I know my family doesn't have enough food to eat. So what if I sleep with this guy." I go to them, in that room. He's a big ugly guy; sit over there waiting for me. And he put the light close to my face, to see, you know, to look closer. He plays with my hair. And all of the sudden he said like, "You love your husband?" I say, "Yes, very much." "Do you love me?" I said, "No." And he said, "If I sleep with you, what would you say?" "I don't want to, but I have no choice. You would force me anyway." He said, "No. You don't want to, I wouldn't do it to you this time. I wait until you ready. There's the rice, in a big pot of rice, and underneath of the pot they keep the egg, you know, in there, so you take it home, and come back. Don't let anybody see it." Thanks god to the ugly soldier. He keep do this for about two, three month in a row. Nobody knows. I got just enough for my mother and my

father that keep them longer. And that guy, instead of decide to go around with me, I don't know why he just give enough to supporting me.

From time to time, when they start to change the leader, O.K., on that time--I don't know, you been through that experience before, about *Pol Pot*. Did you been through that this time? Remember after *Khmer Rouge*, they exchange to other guy from what we call.... They claim they start to change the leader. And the leader who supporting me, we have to be in a special trainer. You know what I'm saying? During that time they change the leader, I got another leader, would know exactly who I were, would know exactly where I live, who got all the detail, such and such. And they figured out there's no way they can kill me, because if the two children with me, they would kill all three together. But now only I'm left. Why do we keep the slave for what? To do, you know, to do right. I cannot do much thing like everybody. This the way they said, but I work hard like everybody. So O.K., they decide like, "O.K. we kill her."

On that day there are three soldiers who walk in front of me, and the leader who sit on a horse with a big long knife. It's a knife, right? Yes a big long knife. Another two or three soldiers with the gun, you know, after me, and they took three girls, me and the other two girl to kill. Our neighbor knew about this and so does my parent. I walk right across my house. I didn't see my parent. I knew they probably brokenhearted already to see they were going to kill. During that time they did probably pass, and I did tell my mother the day before they decide to kill me I said like, "If I die, I found a way to meet my children. But if some reason I'm still alive, you will see my blouse." You know that I still have kind of flowered blouses that I wore, you know, something to show her off that I'm die or not. At that time, before they took--they kill me, they figured out that oh, maybe it's time for you to eat before you die. They make you cook, and you eat, you can eat everything you want. What I mean everything you want, just the rice and a piece of dried fish, like salty fish.

Here I am cook, and waiting to die, and all of the sudden the plan has changed. That leader talking with the other leader, that I didn't know he was the leader also. I just make a cup of tea for him, and I tell him, "This is the last day for me to die." I wish, if I die in a calm way, I don't want him to cut my head. I want him to shoot me, you know, because it faster. And that guy said, "Why are you so brave to talk about die." And I said, "One way or another I have to die anyway. I wish I would want to live for another year, but I don't think they can do it." He said, "What have you done wrong?" I said, "I didn't do nothing wrong. They just take the wrong information. They thought my husband who is a soldier, which is wrong. I hate soldier. He is the taxi driver." And I talked to him more about, you know... And that guy, he is the leader of the guy who is my leader. And then he says, "Well, we'll see about it." And he goes to talk with that guy. He said, "Leave that girl for another chance. Make she work harder, but don't kill her." The thing is, it just change, just like this. And at that time another group, a group that I used to work with, they walk across from me. I take off my shirt and

give it to them and say, "Would you please give this to my mother. It's mean I'm alive."

But I have to separate, live away from her. Then I live separate from my mother, and some of them would tell her I die, some of them would tell her "I saw her;" but nobody can see me, because I live in a special train. I work very, very hard, but at least I had enough food to eat, because, you know like you get close to the soldier, you have thing to eat. It doesn't help me much. The more I eat, the more I got my beauty back. That guy tries to fall in love with me again. This is not just in love, it also the jealousy because his wife's...most of the soldier wife are very, you know they are more like their husband slave. They would do anything their husband said. They hate me so much. But they also have to support me because their husband loves me. And luckily one thing that I--I don't know what helped them not to rape me for so many reason. For one time until they figured out, so O.K. they cannot do, because they're fight. They fight all the time, they decide to send me to work very, very hard condition and far away from home.

Here I am, and dig the canals very, very deep, and so many people got killed over there for (speaks to Svang in Khmer. Svang: Malaria). Yes malaria. So many people are died from that. And here I am all by myself. Work very hard, and one day I become to have that too. I have very high temperature. I don't know where I am and who I am. I wouldn't eat and I wouldn't do anything. I cannot go to anything. I am just waiting to die. You know in our country we have some special kind of plant, it tastes terrible. It tastes very bitter, but would help you temperature. You have to boil them and drink them. One day when I wake up, I still know myself a little bit. Nobody around, here I am crawl through the grass, which is the grass, that grass would grow everywhere. I pulled the grass. I didn't have enough energy to pull the grass. Here I am fall to sleep right there. I dreamt I saw a very, very strange soldier come over with a very different costume, and come toward and give me a pile of grass, and tell me to "drink this, and you will be fine. You will be strong. You will be good from now, you will be fine from now on." Here I am in the dream, and I just figured out, I asked him, "How?" The soldier didn't say anything, and he walked past, and he gives me three orange. I never forget that dream. He said, "This orange will protect you when you cry, but this one will numb you. You wouldn't know any feeling. You probably stop hurting, you probably stop--you know like somebody who to make you forget who you are? And I woke up. It doesn't feel any better, but at least I got energy to pull the weed to boil. I go back, crawl back, and boil the water. It taste awful, but I drink it anyway. After I drink, and I fall to sleep. They said I fall asleep for two day without eating. They thought I die, but I still breathing. When I woke up, I start to getting better and better and better.

One thing that I feel so strange, I'm very tough. When I start to stop, not care about who would kill anybody in front of me, who would rape anybody in front of me, who would hurt anyone--I start to have that feeling. I just don't care. I never smile, I never cry. My face is more like a...everybody would said like, you know, "How come you never smile?" I don't know, look like you wear a mask.

You don't have any feeling. I lost the feeling, I lost the happy--I lost my sense of humor. I lost a lot of things. I just more like a robot. You tell me what to do I'll do it. Time for me to go home, I go home, and eat, and sleep, and that's it. From that moment my father died. And I couldn't believe I didn't cry. I didn't cry when my father died. I didn't cry when my mother died. I didn't cry when my brother died. They start to die one after another. I stop crying. It's just--I feel lost more and more, but you have--I think you don't have enough energy to cry anymore, because that happened so often. And my brother become crazy after my father died. He would laugh. He would do all kind of crazy thing. And here I am look like a...I don't know, a big piece of wood that doesn't care about anything. When they took my mother...my father body away, I can hear everybody cries around me. I thought, but my mind is like I'm die—I hear in some way so far away, but I cannot see. You know what I'm saying? Like somebody next door cry, you didn't see what happen in front of you. But finally my brother couldn't do it, couldn't bury my father. I do it myself. Here I am come to be more like--used to be very weak, and become to be almost got killed so many times, start to put my life together...no, no, no, no, not life...lost my mind, but I have some strong energy that I couldn't believe it. I make a whole big--I dig a whole big grave for my father. My sister and me did it. I put my father body, you know, and then we bury him. To put him away I didn't cry. I just said to him, "Dad, you bring me here, but you die before us. But we will dead with you someday." But I'm not cry. I come back home. My mother look at me like, "Another one, Hugh." I don't know how to say, it just something that you... I don't think--it's not sorrow. It's just the face of her like, thanks god he's die, he don't have to suffer. You know what I'm saying? That's good, that's it. We are less people live in the family right now. After that, after my father--I think my father, he died after all his grandchildren died, and including my sister. My younger sister died and my father died after him. But I see the mother reaction; it's just like, "Another one, Hugh? Thanks god he's die."

Come home, visit, everything, do everything together again. For a while my younger brother dies, start to die one after another again, until...but like I said from the beginning, I have very strong relationship with my mother. I always hold on to her. I figured that she's the only one switch my place if my price would be everything for me.

The day I work very, very hard in the far, far away, and somebody just tell me like, "Your mother very sick, very ill." My mother, she look fine, but she starts to talk a lot about the past like her jewel, her house, her children, her husband. Even before she dies, just ask me to dress up. At that time we got more food. You know what I'm saying? It's not like before. We get a little bit more food, because I go outside and work, and she's all by herself. She's also working to, and we got a chance to find some way to exchange some rice. My sister, my older sister die before my mother, but after everybody died, I don't remember which one first, my younger brother or my older sister. But there are only five of us left, who is my two brothers now, my two sisters now, and I. But we all

separate. My two brothers would be in the children's group. My younger sister, one which is we don't know where she is. And the one is two years older than me, who we heard where she lives, but we never see each other, and me. Here comes the point where my mother was very ill. I come home, and she still got some food left, and she asks me to do her a favor, "Dress up like we were in *Phnom Penh*." None of them would fit us, because of the swelling. We dress the way we do for her. And the day she die, she die in peace, because she just getting weaker and weaker, and gone. I know she die by, not by starvation, but she die by broken heart. Right about four or five months after her husband died. Before she died, she ask me just, she told me, she said like, "You know I love you more than anybody else in the whole family, and I ask you to do me a favor." I say, "Yes, I try." She said, "Take you brother and your sister to America." Here I am out of the wood, I don't know where America is. We just heard the word. "Would you do it for me?" I say, "Yes, mother. I would do for you. I will do it." And she says like, "And I know you can make it. To me, you are the brightest, you are the smartest, and you are the beauties. You can do it. Take you brother and your sister to another country. And make another life." (Crying as she recounts the story) And I ask myself, "God, when? A promise is a promise, I try my best mom." She said, "I will be with you all the time. I know exactly you cry, you happy, but this is the moment I want you go to do it." I look at my sister, just my sister and I. We look at each other, and I said to her, "Yes mom, I will take them to America. I will." And she's died.

The day that I got my feeling that...I feel so weak that I cannot even lift up anything. I feel like this is it. I don't want to live anymore, because she is my best buddy. But one thing that she holds me on, she said like, "You're going to take my place. Five of you are going to survive." She knew my other sister still alive. "So now only four of you, but you going to survive to support the others. Five of you would be hold the family name, would make it brighter." And we just... She died in peace. She just goes, weaker and weaker, and then gone. (Pauses to recover her). It the time I cry again. Not outside. Just, I feel like something inside tear apart. I feel like people are so rude to, I don't know. And on god I blame everything that take her away from me. And I also don't want to live. I figured out this is it? I'm very strong with my children, with everything I seem to--it's O.K., because I always had somebody who was there. Now it's gone, plus I take the big responsibility for the four. I don't know where I'm going to go, I don't where. Make a promise to her to America that I don't know where to go. My sister, and me we just look at each other, and we said, "I can't bury my mother." They did bury my mother. Then we separated part again. I have to go back to my group, so does my sister, the one who went to come where I am.

From time to time, they keep make me work harder and harder, and one day they decide to--my time is up. I didn't do any better. They want to kill me again. I don't feel afraid, or nervous, or anything at all. I feel that die just may be the place to go away from the pain I have. They got themselves ready, they will put me on...(speaks to Svang in Khmer. Svang: ox cart.)...Yes an ox cart. They

got everything ready, and they said--but this time they don't want me to go to the part, that they would kill me in a quiet place that nobody would see, because the stories come very strong, that they know I am a soldier wife. They take me over there, close to the place that I can see--I can smell, I didn't see many people, but I can smell, you know odor, their body odor. That guy just turned around and said, "Maybe you should change. You not live in here. Maybe you can live in another place that nobody knows you. And I would tell them a camp where nobody would know you." And I don't care. I didn't even beg him for living. I didn't ask him to die. I don't care. I say, "It up to you." It just come to the point like, if I die, so what? If I live, so what? I have not long anyway. And then he turned around and said, "Yes, maybe I'm not put you in that group. I probably put you in a regular person." You know, the group like my sister. "Maybe you would be a better person." I don't know how bad I am, but they said like that, so I said, "O.K." I didn't even say thank you for the guy that decide to kill me, and he decide to keep me alive, because it up to him. The thing is that night I have to bring everything. Not tells anybody, just move out from that group to be with my sister group, which is a plus, because I got a time to be close with my sister. We had something to talk, like we can stick close together, and we can each see each other from time to time even if different group. At least we can say good night to each other. At least we can go to take a shower. I mean a bath together. From that time things getting tough, and then start to get bad. And my other two brothers, they ask him--he's very weird, he cannot run, and he cannot do anything. They ask him to come back live with me, which is fine. You know, I bring my two brothers back when I cannot here anything from my other sister. At that time, my younger brother, tall right now, thanks god he's so smart. He's so brilliant right now. He becomes to be a stealer at nighttime. He steals something at nighttime; get two for me and for my sister. He would not steal from anybody in the group, but steal from the thing like the fruit, be grown, and we cannot take it. He did. He liked to help other older soldier, and he got some food, and some fish, and you know sometime during that time, at night time we go to bed around--during the winter time we come home around eight o'clock. We have two hour for everybody go catch the frogs about this size. You eat that too. And you would catch all kind of frogs, all kind of snake to eat, to eat food, to cook. Mice, mouse, anything that move, that's alive. My brother he's very good at it. And from that time we got enough rice to eat, but my brother would go fish--it's not fishing, it's more like, he caught all kind of baby frog, all kind of frog, all kind of snake. You know, he's not afraid of the snakes, to feed us. And we all four come to be together. One day, out of the blue, they tell us, "You have to move." But this time we--oh, I forget to tell you about the other soldier who came from *Battambang* which is my father...he is the leader of that group. And he did a lot. (RM: I think we're going to end here. Excuse me for a minute....)

Q. ...September sixteenth, nineteen eighty-nine. That would be interview number three. So at the very end we can talk about this, I mean, I think one of the things that the people have said around telling their story is that it helps you get a different perspective, better perspective on something if you have the opportunity to share your story. I don't know if you have...

A. It's good to let it out to me. I used to hold everything in here, but like, four years ago, I been through extremely difficult stress according to my job and according to my past. So I met one of the psychologists. After talking to her, I decide to let it out, everything, let it out. I become more open. Instead of run away from it, I learn how to live with it. It's not easy. I did it, half of it, but sometime I have been through the extremely, extremely lonely loneliness, loneliness. I feel like I shouldn't be here. Somehow I feel like dying is just the answer of everything. Sometime I feel like dying, just the failure attitude to end everything. Deep breath, I don't know doctor. I went to church. They said, "Take one day at a time," but sometime one day it seems so long. Yesterday I been where I work, and I saw a beautiful--I saw my friend. She has her child who is only eighteen years old. Remind me a lot about my son if he alive. And I told her right to the face, I say, "You're one of the lucky lady." She holds me tight and said, "I know." But I don't think many people would understand it, because the sorrow or loss is a special being loss between mother and children, also very powerful to me, just... I very attached to the baby. I love being a mother very much, but I feel like, to me I feel like this life I feel so unlucky about everything. After the war, after the relationship between...live and die, it's something like that. I'm so unlucky to make friend. I always have one wonderful relation with my mother, that would give me the strength, and beside that I just very unlucky. I just feel like I don't, I cannot, I have nobody to blame, and I also couldn't blame myself. It just happens. If some people heard what I been through, they probably hear, they probably just--some people wouldn't believe it. Like I told my other friend to sit down when she have a problem with the husband and children, and I tell her to sit down and explain to her, not completely, tell her that, just tell her how my husband past, how much I love him, and how much I love my children and they die. And she can't figure out, she doesn't believe it. "That's not true, it's fake." She doesn't believe anybody would take that. I say, "I did." But it is from right now I keep my life go on with the memory and a strength of love from my mother, because sometime I feel myself, "I'm so stupid." And I heard my mother word would say, "No, you're not. Just only a human being, and I know you can do it." From little step, little by little I keep moving. I don't know when I'm going to fail, but I keep moving everyday, little by little, step by step, a little by little. I don't know I will succeed or not. I don't know. Time will tell, but the experience of loss...I don't want anybody to be through this horrible experience. But it just, I don't know, it's just the hurt, the sorrow, the pain is always there. Thirty days a month. I wake up, sometime I take a shower, I still cry in the shower. I miss them so much. I saw the handsome guy, I would pick it--imagine he my husband alive. To see the

loneliness, it's horrible to be alone, to come home, has nobody to talk to except the television. But it's hard because like I said, I'm just unlucky person to make the relationship with anybody; because, I think to American, some people would want to hear, but some doesn't want to hear. Not just Americans, we are human beings, nobody want to hear the sadness. You feel sorry for them, but you don't want to hear it. This is the way my position is, I'm full of pain, I full of hurt, I full of sorrow, I full of a lot of thing that I lost. I have nobody to talk to. That's why I keep myself working from one job to another, come home very tired and go to bed. Sometime I ask myself, "Do I have to keep my life like this for how long?" God know how long. I don't know, because it's there. Thanks god that I'm not take drug, I'm not become to be an alcoholic. Thank god that I still have enough strength to work, because I see so many people, it doesn't matter nationality that cannot help them, become to be crazy. It's good and bad. Good when I still--when I talk about them, I know how far I come away from that, because eight years ago, I mean seven years ago I can't even talk about it, I don't want to think about it. I want to forget the whole thing. Time from time, right now, this is the first hand came to America that I just, you know, remind everything and talk out of the blue like that. It's just...the usual. You talk about it. My body here, but the action, I saw all the action. I imagine the face. I saw the tear. I saw how skinny they were. I saw how bad they look. I saw how horrible for those soldiers look. I saw how nasty, how mean they are to the people. It's all are there, but I never want to think about it. Not everything's come back. But actually I feel great because after I feel I cry, but in the other way, thanks god it's done. I'm not there anymore. It's just that, just like a dream. Sometime when I wake up, I dress to work, and I come home, lie down in front of the television, and I figured out, "Wait a minute. Is this I'm dreaming?" It's still, because what the *Pol Pot* regime did to people, nobody would believe they got their own freedom back, nobody would believe they can come to this far. And now I did it to this far, I don't know how long I can go. I don't know how far I will be. But little by little I keep moving. I decide to make my life better and better. I don't know what this was for the good, but for me I figured out I want to getting better and better. But for my emotion...I don't know, because it's nobody can replace my two children. Nobody. And unless I find a very nice guy or nice man who be understand exactly what I been through. But I don't think many human beings would want to hear the sadness. You want to hear sometime, but it's not all the time. I don't want to keep that memory with me, but it's there. It's automatic. It's there. So, any other question you want to ask? You want me to continue about that?

Q. No, no. That's good. Continue, I mean...(break in tape)

ST. I got off at *Kampong Kdei* to live in the forest near *Phnom Kulen (Phnom =* Mountain)

SP. There's a lot of killer over there too. It's a major killing over there too. You lost any children?

ST. Yeah, I lost my son.

SP. How old were they?

ST. He's eight years old.

SP. How many, one?

ST. Yeah. I lost one. I have one left. I have one left...

SP. Son too! you had two sons?

ST. Yeah.

SP. This is one thing I'm getting jealous. I lost them all. Everything that all women want to have, and I have it. I have them all, and I lost them all. This is one thing that I told my friend, "At least you have something to depend on. You have something to hold on to, to do it for." I don't know what I'm doing for anybody right now. For myself, it's no meaning. You have something; you do for your son. This is the thing to keep me this far that I keep hold on; I do this for my children. When my children gone, I do this for my mother. And my mother gone, I do this for my brother and my sister. And now they all had grown up. They have, you know, their family. I do this all to myself, but it just--I feel like to me the world is so big, and I cannot call for help; because this is the time I really needed somebody to--to have the shoulder to cry on, to talk to. It doesn't sound like I need sex...but people could get the wrong idea. They thought maybe I been alone so for so long. I'm not alone. I'm with sorrow of a lot of loss, but I just--least have something to share it, to talk to, to hold when I cry, but it's very hard to find that kind of guy. You know what I'm talking about? How about your husband?

ST. He's arrested for many years ago in July 1977. I don't know where he is. He die or he live, I don't know.

Q. Where did he live? Arrested in where?

ST. It is the same place. He's arrested in 1977 before we live together, until he was arrested. That time because the other communist group came...

SP: Yeah. When they change the stupid politic from one, from bad become worst. Well from beginning to the session and where they start to kill a lot of people by

starvation. I think they do this on purpose, to kill. Then they start to kill educated people after they found out who is well educated. By the time they seem to be calm down a little bit, a little bit more at ease with the people, and you become more friends with each other, and the other group comes over. And the new group would come over, would kill all the people who would train us before. You know what I'm saying? So they kill each other.

Q. The communists were killing...)

A. The communists, yeah, they kill each other. Is that the same way over there too? And they start to kill each other, and from time to time and they survive, but give us more room to move a little bit. That's why people start to escape from that time. But from there I didn't even know where you could escape. You already got killed. But people still want to escape anyway. During that time, after, they both become a big enemy in--then the Vietnam come over, right? Is that happen over there too? Vietnam comes over. When Vietnamese show up, so many people who is used to fight each other, then they start--Vietnam come over. First of all they kill the leader, new leader. You know what I'm saying, the newest leader. And the newest leader who try to escape, they would got killed by the old, old leader. They kill each other. From that time I pressed instead of run toward--most everybody, they run--they follow the leader. No, I run face the soldier, the Vietnam soldier. I would tell my two brother and two sister I would rather to be die by gun, instead of die by hanging, by anything. And we did, we run face the soldier. And on that time I see so many, Vietnamese soldiers raped some friends of mine. It just--that moment I couldn't believe my sister and my brother. We all make a little joke until now. On that time, I'm very talent with everything by hand like crochet and a lot of thing, I do that exchange of food for the soldier; that's why I get more food than somebody else. You know, because I'm very talent with that. (SP and ST speak Khmer.) Hammock. In that time they use a lot of hammock, even the soldier, even yourself. So, but the soldier, they would--the way they design the gun and the helmet is so different, because they have to have something to hang on their gun to match the hammock. You know what I'm talking about? O.K. I know how to make the helmet, to make all different color, all different design, make look, you know, like a snake or you know. And I also crocheted. The most of the soldier smoke, and they would use for special--they want to make something to make their life look prettier. You know what I'm saying, to crochet just to fit it. It's little more like way you put a glove on. It's just to look nice. And I do all those thing, and most of the soldier has, we use a big scarf. I know how to crochet the edge of the scarf to make it pretty, that's why I got a lot extra food from them.

During that time when the Vietnamese come over, the day that we heard a big fight...my other sister just show up out of the blue. We are five of us together. No, my younger sister show up, but my younger brother, the other one, he go away that time. And out of the blue they all show up at the same time. And I feel

so great, and I think like, O.K., we know from the bad experience, no way we can go back to Cam--to Phnom Penh, but we know one way or another, if we die we die together, but we die by guns. At least they had a lot of food to eat, not like the first time. The Vietnamese soldiers come over. Here I am, and my sister, and we had another two friends, who is--since she doesn't have any parent also she follow us, which is... We have four adults, two little sons, and one teenager in our group. There's my younger sister. One of my friends just comes over. The Vietnamese soldier just raped her. And she come to me, she say that, "Be careful, I just got raped myself." Here I am with four adults. They all, to them, they all loved somebody who are white skin. You know, especially like your skin, and they like Cambodian-Chinese mix. And I am also white skin myself. So here we are. We grab the dirt, you know, wrap all over our body to make it look ugly. And I start to change the way I walk to make more like crazy. You know, put--run like that, and to look in a different--to look ugly. From that time, during the dinnertime we just eat--we cook, we eat dinner. It's so funny that my brother, my younger brother asks me, "What happened with your face? Why you look so ugly?" Because full of the dirt and the mud. And I said like, I said to him, "Quiet! I just want to look that way." And my sister says, "He doesn't know. No matter what you do, you still look who you are." Laugh… Because, you know, with the dirt, with everything it still look funny, but it's also--we make a joke of it. Then we came out from that tough group, and we go into another group. Then on that group we seem to be more understanding, and then we can listen to each other. We take a bath, and after that we sit down and rest for a while. And then I have to start to change any color that doesn't look quite as good. You know, because we run out of the black clothes. So we can, you know, we can through it away, because it's too heavy for us. And we have all the color clothes. For the new leader, they give us a lot of bright, bright color, like blue, green. Is that right over there too? Like a big scarf, they just give me a beautiful big scarf, it's blue to make a helmet, but I didn't do it. I made for my hair, for my scarf.

Q. Now who is this, the Vietnamese?

A. No. Not Vietnamese. The guy before Vietnamese...(voices overlap)... Just before the Vietnamese. And they seem to be like--they start to treat the people, this new group, they treat people nicer than the other group. This is more, a little bit more--this is, to me, I think they are more like...*Heng Samrin*? No not *Heng Samrin*. *Heng Samrin*, yeah, is the new leader. *Pol Pot* and *Heng Samrin* group are different, isn't that right? (ST: *Heng Samrin* right now.) Oh no, not *Heng Samrin*, the other one. *Pol pot* and the other one, *Ieng Sary* right? (ST: *Ieng Sary*?) Yes. This is what I heard. This guy seem to be very nice to the people, who if you call us the middle group, middle generation, and the other group that they fight with, they call older generation. And the new leader who same from *Kampong Chhnang*, most of them came from *Kampong Chhnang* from the east, you know what I'm talking about? They are the new group, they are call

themselves the east--they are good to the people more like us, but they are very bad to the people who is the really strict in *Pol Pot*. You follow me? You follow me?

Q. But the Vietnamese hadn't come into the country yet?

A. No. Not yet. But I'm talking about before the Vietnamese come, the lifestyle to getting little bit better. We work hard like we do, but we got enough fabric to use. Not enough, it's just a little bit more than, you know, more than poor. It's not quite enough. We work very, very hard, but we got more food to eat, and we seem to be got more of freedom, little bit more freedom, until the Vietnamese come. We escape from that, during the Vietnamese come, then we have to fight to across the border, the fighting get, or we have to follow them. And I am the leader of the family, I say, "O.K. we go for it, we go across and we are dead." And we make it, we come to live in *Maung* District for a month, and luckily nobody in my family got rape or anything. We live over there for--I don't know how many months they be live in--we live in *Maung* District for a month. You know *Maung* District, right? We live over there for a month, then we escape to, we move to *Battambang*, to where that we want to go from the beginning. Listen to this: we are sixteen people in our family. In our family only five survive. And we come to *Battambang* because I have my brother-in-law who is my oldest sister husband. He live over there, we know where he live. We try to go over there. But before we reach him, we met one of my brother's friends. We live with him for several months. My life is so complicated. Then I met my brother-in-law, come to take us all to live in *Mongkol Borei*, which is *Battambang* right now. There another life I couldn't believe. For that life, everybody come, they work very hard, but they work for their own pocket. You know what I'm saying? They work very hard. They try to do everything for--they got the freedom. Not hundred percent freedom, but at least they got more than before. They can go to work, they... They do their private thing, and I don't, because here I am to live with my brother-in-law. I have to work like a dog, like I work in *Pol Pot* regime. (voice rises) I did, but for my brother-in-law sake for his benefit. Until now I am still very angry. This is I'm call angry, because when I look around myself, I see everybody eat good food. I see everybody can work when they want to. They don't have to, if they don't want to. But I have to work because I live with my brother-in-law. I thought maybe I could begin from that to make enough for me to start my own life with my family. Everybody surround me, and include the people I work with, I still eat rice soup. Like rice, I had lots of water in it. Everybody eat all kind of candy, and anything, and I say, "Can I have that thing to eat," because I still work for them. I live with them for about almost a year. Worked very, very hard like I work in *Pol Pot* regime. This is worse, not worth to work hard like *Pol Pot* regime, but the feeling is feeling worse because you looks around you, everybody don't have to work when they don't have to. Here I have to work, even

I have to work surround people that they don't have to. You follow me? You understand what I'm saying?

Q. And why did your brother-in-law do this?

A. Eat more like they want for their own benefit to work for themselves.

Q. So he was taking advantage of you family...

A. Yes. Taking advantage because I had no parent, I had nothing. And then for that time, until that we grow the rice--we do so many, we work so hard until everything completely done. They come with a very stupid superstition. They say like, according to what...the, how do you call it the (speaks to Svang in Khmer. ST: Fortuneteller.) Yeah, fortuneteller tell them like, they cannot afford my family and myself and to live with them, because if I live with them I will bring the luck down. You know what I'm saying? It's just a excuse for us to get out, because we complete everything done. We say, "O.K., since we work very hard for you, now you got everything all set. This is the poor excuse." I said, "O.K. God will know." On that time I say, "God know." I make a curse that if this is mean I live with to take the luck away from you, I hope everything getting much better when I leave this home. But this is just a stupid trick to use my family, to use my brother and sister and myself. They will see. God will tell them.

And I moved to live in *Svay* District, in the *Svay Sisophon* District, in the border of...is that Thailand? No. It's the border of Thailand I was going to say Boston--*Battambang*. Yeah, the border of *Battambang* and the others. (ST and SP's voices overlap) Yes, seem with close to the border of Thailand, right? And we live over there for about four or five months, then we decide to, I decide to come to live in the Thailand border. And we leave in a morning. We left there in the morning, and we came to live in the border for very, very hard life, I couldn't believe what we been through then. On that time we escaped. During time that I escaped, I couldn't believe, my younger brother, he's about eight or nine years old, he's swollen. He cannot walk so far, because he, his body full of water, you know? You turn yellow. I don't know how you call it here. Until now I couldn't figure it out why it's make people could be swollen like that. My other brother, he is very, very tiny and very, very thin. You know, where we had enough food to eat, but we never had enough time to rest, because we keep work for other people, and also we--we still doesn't have, like, all kind of meat or steak to eat like here. So we decide to escape. During that time we left that...*Sisophon* three o'clock in the morning. I don't remember the name, they call *Phoumthmei*, is right before the border we got caught by Vietnamese soldier. There are about six or seventeen people in my group who escape together that include my family. And the Vietnamese saw us, caught us. They run after us, they shooting. Here I am in the condition that I'm very weak. And I told my sister--on that time, I forget to tell you before I left, become very ill again, very weak--and I told my sister, I say, "If

something happen to me, just go. Forget about me, O.K.? Just go. My youngest brother and me are very, very ill. If something happen, you three go! Just keep going! You don't care about me." And they say, "O.K." We make a decision. On that time we want to separate instead of being in the group together.

The soldier one took us. My two brothers, no…my two sisters and my other brother go away because they go fast. They find a way to hide. Here I am with my brother that is very swollen, and we have to walk with this high of mud. And my brother just told me, "Go! Go!" He just pushes me to go. I still am faster than him. "Its just Go! Keep--Go! Don't worry about me." And how should I leave my nine years old boy...son to die on the, you know, on the farm like that? I keep pull him. And from that time he said like, "Oh mother, why don't you let me die? Why I have to go through this? This is true during our life and die." He keeps blaming my mother since. And all of the sudden, he just figured out, "O.K., you are..." And he got up and he said like, "...come this way." You know in the way you run, you have to run quick? And seem to be I'm very close to him. I hold his hand; first of all I pull him, right. And for the son, he keeps blaming and blaming, I pull him harder, and he getting so tired he sit. He said, "I don't care. If they want to kill me, go ahead." And the soldier after us, I can see him really. And all of this I say, "O.K. If we die, we die together." "So what," we said. I saw out of the blue that little boy get up and pull me. He says, "O.K. Let's go. Hurry up, they're after us." It's about two or three rice fields, I mean two or three, you know (speaks in Khmer to Svang) about four or five, fifteen feet? I don't know how to measure it. (ST: One hundred meter.) Yeah. That we can see, that they can see us. So do we, we can saw them. It's only two of us are behind everybody in a group, right? Here my brother got up, because first of all I decide to sit down, I decide to die too because I'm too tired. I figured out, so what the heck. I mean that I'm not going to take it anymore. And he pulled me and say, "There is the...," how do you call *Dam Bauk*? You know, it's like the small, little mountain? How do you call it? That's not a mountain. It's a very, very small part of a old, old...it's a pile of dirt that they... (RM: Mound you mean.) Not mound. Yeah, the similar to mound, but like a very, very...(RM: Like a hill.), like a hill, yes. He saw that. He said, "Come on behind the hill." And we go over there. I couldn't believe the soldier miss us, because there is nothing around there that could be hide. We just lie in there, both us over there. And we said, "I couldn't believe we saw the soldier walk past us. Is that a miracle?" If they saw, they would shoot us.

And by the time they walk past, for about one hour, and everybody start to get together. We made such a joke from it. I told my sister about, you know everybody tell their story how, you know, they got in and out. And on that time, my sister, to live with my brother-in-law for several month, my sister, she's... oh, to live in, after we leave my brother-in-law, we come to be a sales lady. We sell all kind of vegetable, like lemon grass, like cucumber. We sell everything that we go to buy from the farm, and we said we still have a little bit money to buy gold, because on that time they use gold. For the condition my brother cannot walk any

longer. So we hire somebody, (chuckles) I couldn't believe, we hire somebody who will, come to sell the vegetable like we are, we hired him like three...(speaks in Khmer) very small amount of gold, that we give it to him just for him to carry my youngest brother to the border. And he did. We manage it. But come to the point my other brother getting jealous too, because he's not--he's very thin and very tired. He doesn't understand why we have to hire that guy to carry him. How about himself? He cannot walk himself too. Here I am, I mean, I cannot carry him, so does my other sister, but she try to, you know, say something nice to him, be, you know, we be show him that we think about him also, but we cannot afford it until we come to live in the camp 007. We live over there for a year. No, we live over there for several months. I don't remember, four or five, five or six months we live in 007. Very, very tough condition also. You live over there too?

ST. No. I live in *Norng Somith* (border camp.)

SP: I live in 007 Camp. My good, it's a horrible, horrible, horrible place, but on that time I become to be a sales lady. I sell all kind of property, you know, that you buy from the black market; they buy from the black market. And the gold, we have some from, you know, left over from my mother, and we can sell, exchange for the stuff to make the living. Make the living over there seem to be fun, but they also live in a fear, like I ask myself, "God, how can I go to America? I am stuck in the younger--I meant stuck in the border. And one time we go to--we had a Red Cross. Is that right? UNICEF, how call it, UNICEF (voices overlap. RM: UNICEF, right.) UNICEF found my brother, that he is very pale, and he needs some treatment. One day they decide to send our whole family to *Khao I Dang* camp. This is the big decision because so many people who came through that, who been, you know sometime instead of bring to, carry down, they bring you some place else that you didn't even know, and then got killed by starvation again. This is just the rumor or could be true, I don't know. We put our life in UNICEF hand. They have to bring me back to *Khao I Dang* camp, because I need a lot of treatment myself, because I'm very, very... I think because that time it must be stress. Every time I think about something, I fainted; I was unconscious.

We all, the family comes to live in the camp, live in *Khao I Dang* camp for a year. When I found out about my sister, my sister, me, and then I meet one of the girl who been through the exactly the same, similar what I been through. She lost children, and her husband lost in a war also. We become friend with her, and she came after that to live with us. This, it would be another crazy story. You couldn't believe it; her name ST. We live together. We came to live in a camp, and then we moved from the 007 Camp to the *Khao I Dang* camp. And we also bring her with me, with us. To live in the *Khao I Dang* camp, I have a very severe problem with my stomach, that I have diarrhea all the time. I cannot eat anything. There I'm very, very ill. I stay in a hospital for about five or seven days. And I come home, but the doctor couldn't say much because all I do is need lots of vitamin and a lot of food. I'm about three times bigger than what I am now, but

it's all swollen. To live in there, I make a friend with ST. She becomes very, very good friend with me, because on that time she's helping me a lot with the medicine. She helps me a lot to exchange the food to be, you know, to make my condition getting better and better. And we got a job to work in a hospital for being a cook. Give her a chance to eat enough food what we want, give us enough chance to hide some food to exchange for more clothes.

We live in the *Khao I Dang* camp for about a year, then we found out about my adopted brother, who is, work in the embassy of Thailand, Bangkok embassy, and we send him a letter that we are five survive. And he came over, and he sponsored us. I don't know you have much experience in Thailand camp, or *Khao I Dang* camp or not. I don't have much, because I live like, I'm very ill, but luckily I got to work for the hospital being a cook. I got enough food for my family. I also got enough things to exchange for clothes, so I'm getting better and better. I live in Thailand, in the *Khao I Dang* camp for about a year, until I got my name to live in, came to *Chhunburi* camp. You live in *Chhunburi* also ? I live in *Chhunburi* for six months waiting to get a name to come to United States. And I got a name to come here without my friends, because she's not the family, and my sponsor just the five of us, not her. So, then we live in *Chhunburi*, we got the name to come here. In...no, not here, I'm sorry. We live in Philippines. Did you live in Philippine also? We live in *Chhunburi* for four or five months, I don't remember, then we got a name to come to Philippine, but we live in Philippine for--then the way we go to learn English a little bit. We live in *Batta Ann* for six months. We learn how to speak. Learn a lot about American living style. Learn about...how to find a job, the way you eat, and everything. We learn over there for six months in *Batta Ann*. And we got the name to come here.

Q. What happened to your friend, where is she now?

A. By the time I came here, then I sponsor her. She lives in America right now.

Q. So you sponsored her. So this is a good point to stop. What do you think?

A. Yeah.

## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 4

Q. September twenty...(ST: Thirty.) September thirtieth, Nineteen eighty-nine. We're coming to the end of interview number four. So you were saying the use of rape, you know, why the Khmer Rouge used rape. You were trying to explain this.

A. Well, the thing is sometime its just revenge.

Q. Revenge. So they would use rape for revenge.

A. Yeah, for revenge and for the--but very few that they finally fall in love after they rape, because they can feel... I don't know. To me, I figured out the way you make, they way you have sex is how you, the way you make love. Woman from--real educated woman from the city is very different from woman in a city or in a--you know, because we have more like a feminine life style. How do you say like, some woman know how to turn a man on? And most of woman who was brought up would never see outside the house, which doesn't know. She thought like, sex is just for men, not for her. (RM: Yes. That's right.) O.K., and..(ST: unclear. Starts to laugh.) Break in tape.

Q. So the sex, so the countrywomen, you feel...in other words, they may love their husband, but they would give sex just to please their husband more than...

A. ...More than please themselves. Yeah. They didn't even, like a, they didn't even--they afraid to tell their husband how they feel, they want more, they were happy, no. And rape, it just, sometime when they start to rape some kind of woman who will try to take advantage of that kind of rape, you know, would be pleased with him instead of being rash with him, it work. A lot of time it worked, because that guy after already be falling in love, and more and more and more and.(dishes clink) thank you...more and more and all of sudden he start to, you know, try to escape together. So that...

Q. He would find sensitivity in the woman that he was not used to, and he would...

A. Yeah, and he would be pleased more. Yeah.

Q. And you know a situation this actually happened in?

A. I know that because I, actually myself, I been...(break in tape)...from, I been used to myself because I'm not talking about rape, I'm talking about a woman attitude, a feminine ask. The way you go to ask something from men, you have the feminine attitude. I think we are old enough we know. You a man, you can probably figure out, if somebody comes to ask in a nasty way, you wouldn't want to give to him or

her. But if somebody comes to you in a very feminine way, you know what I'm saying? You have the choice, you have the choice to give it to her or not. And I think most of the people who get educated, who will read about it...in this country you learn by TV, or you can see a lot by reading. And most of Cambodian woman who live on the jungle, most of the Cambodian would be married to those soldiers; she never knew the outside world. And she more like, she thought she's a piece of slave love.

Q. Slave love.

A. Yeah. Slave love. And the woman who was brought up in Cambodia, in a capital city, you knew the outside world. You know the attitude to ask. You know the way to turn the man on or turn it off. (RM: Yes. Yeah.) And I think men...is that answer to your question?

Q. Sure. Yeah sure.

A. And I think that's why rape become not just rape, and become serious, and the girl try to use the guy for more food, and the guy try to use that woman for sex. Bingo. They become to be useless to each other, but they got what they want. The man got the sex, and the woman has the food for the children.

Q. So they would form a relationship over time.

A. Yes. So that's happen a lot. Not a lot, but that's happen everywhere. I mean it's in my group, or any other group too, O.K. But...

Q. And then maybe at some point they might actually fall in love too, they may come to that...(SP: They did. They did really...) they did really fall in love, yes.

A. But you cannot tell does that really fall in love or not, because first of all they are using each other. Yeah, and by the time they figured out, maybe they're in love.

Q. That's right. Well, very well.

Q. So now we're continuing with interview number five. Now, in--you grew up in the city, right?

A. Yes.

Q. So in the city--you know we've talked with other Cambodian women who have lived in the countryside, so what we're very interested in this interview is how in the city, in your personal life, people would, in the traditional way deal with the loss of a loved one. You know, how would people share the grief, you know,

what kind of ceremony, you know, the whole thing if you could give us some idea.

A. O.K. Some people would grieve like...they hold the body in the house. But it--the body, they take the body to the hospital. Sometime they take to the hospital. Sometime when the body sleep, die in the house, they hold the body in the house, like if you are wealthy; you probably show the body for a week. If you are doesn't have enough money, you probably show the body in the house for at least three days, no matter how poor you are, right? And during that time, during the body still in the house, you have like a, you serve (?) the money, like everybody would come over have dinner or have lunch over there. They also bring the money or bring the rice, something for charity to the body, but of course to the person who is more like, how do you call it, the party header? The header of the party, but the main thing it just like to...to make the ceremony for the body feel like even they alive, and even they are died they have many friend, and who come to, just to say good-bye. You know, they take so much time to do like that, and they invited monk to preach. (speak in Khmer to Svang) Preach and like, the monk would have, like a monk ceremony in the morning or noon, and at nighttime they have a special kind of preach for the older people. They are talking mostly about life and death, O.K.? And they would, like after the treaty or the ceremony over, they would have a big, big, like a funeral, O.K.? Take the body to burn, or to bury. For that time, there is the biggest day, it's more like everybody dress up white, the family dress up white or black and go through the ceremony, and they take picture like... I don't know why, it's just our cultures that take picture. It's just the memory for the last day of that person, O.K. And we all go to the funeral. And some people they probably give away the money. The family would give away the money, like; you know throw away the money. Sometime, some family, you are very wealthy, would give away expensive clothes, or stuff that... And sometime they figured out the meaning of that is just to mean like you come in this world, and even you die, your sun is still in here, and you generous, and you friendly. It's still be with you, no matter you come or go. You know what I'm saying? Like, and they have the popcorn that's spread all over after the funeral. It's mean like, your bone is still all over the world, all over the land, which is, is that right? Would you relay the same? This is the way my parent taught me, the way you do the popcorn away, or the rice away. (ST agreeing) Like it means you born, you generous, I am nice; when you live and you die, you come the same way. And you go to the funeral, and they have a big speak at the funeral until they bury or they burn. They come back, and after that they have like a ten-day after they put the body away or burn the body away. They have a hundred day, there is the biggest ceremony, right? After a hundred day, the day after the body dies, a hundred days, a biggest ceremony. And sometime they would have the bands, sometime would have the--would go to the temple. It's not the same kind of band would make you happy, but it's just some kind of music that remind about the body childhood. Is that right, the same kind you do?

ST: Yeah. I guess I have some kind of music to remind people about the spirit...

A. Yeah, the spirit, yes. And this is the way we live and die before Pol Pot regime.

Q. And the cremation would there be cremation? Was I buried, the flesh was buried, or is it cremated, burned?

A. Sometime it's...Some, they way they like it. I think most of the Chinese, they burned it, right? (ST: No, they bury.) Most Chinese, they bury, oh, opposite then. Most Chinese are buried, most Cambodians are burned it.

Q. Cremated.

A. Yes, cremated, because...

Q. And they put the ashes in the temple...

A. No. Sometime they put in the house; sometime they put in the temple. Because some that they figured out, you know, even the body die or alive, there are no room for that. You cannot take the, how do you call, the skeleton? How do you call it? (ST: Ashes.) Ashes, yeah, you can take the ashes home with you. I mean, it doesn't have the rule; they are no laws. You can do everything you want. You can leave in a temple. You can take it home with you.

Q. And what do you believe, I mean your family and your belief, I mean what happens to the spirit of the person, I mean is there a reincarnation, or is there...

A. Tell you the truth, through that time, before *Pol Pot* regime, I had no experience because nobody in my family die at all.

Q. You had no experience with death?

A. No, no experience for death at all, but I had experience just with friend and close friend, but it's not close to my family, not at all.

Q. And what was the attitude towards the dead, I mean how did the *Pol Pot* situation deal with the dead?

A. It's horrible. I bury my parent by my own hand. Like I said, you used to put the body in a beautiful clothes, the favorite clothes that the body used to like it before they died, O.K.? You'd give them a bath, you give the body--O.K. first of all you give the body a bath, right? And you put them beautiful clothes. It's like in here. You put beautiful clothes, you put a little bit of make-up, or sometime you just put

beautiful clothes for the body before you put the body in the box. Is that the box? (ST: Coffin.) Coffin. You put the body in the coffin the only thing the body used to like, O.K. And if the body is the mother of the baby, and the mother die and the baby still alive, sometime you put, like a...watermelon with the body to pretend like this is your baby. You not go alone, you go with the baby also. This is what I saw in the person next door. I say, "Why you do that?" because they put like a watermelon with that; because they feel like the soul is not completely peace, because she still miss her children, the baby, the youngest one. So they view the soul...it's just a fake baby, pretend like--even you die, you still have the baby with you. But this baby is not you any more, leave it alone. You follow me? After that you put the body in the coffin. You go to the funeral and you bury it. In *Pol Pot* regime...this is I'm talking about my own experience. When my little girl died, first experience, horrible experience in my family. It's my little girl. She's young. She's the first one. I remember I had a beautiful, a beautiful, how you call...not blanket, but it's softer than that. (Says a Khmer word) It's more like a blanket, but it's made by silk. It's beautiful. It's a gift from my mother after I get married. I cannot even find a wood to make a coffin for her. So I wrap her in the beautiful fabric, with her nice clothes...not very nice, it's just the clothes that she like, you know. My father and my brother bury her. I didn't even go over there, because I cannot go. I don't think I can deal with it. Through my family, I mean I cannot even find a peace of wood to put underneath of the hole. You know what I'm saying, because when you dig the ground, it's kind of get wet underneath. Even though, you have no choice. You have to put your parent over there anyway, because you cannot even find anything else to do. Luckily, like my mother I been wrap her in the beautiful clothes that she have. And I didn't even find the anything. It's a horrible thing after I bury her for two or three days, somebody tell me that, this is still a nightmare for me until, how they say, like the wolf been go through the whole thing because they didn't dig her high enough--not deep enough. They didn't bury her deep enough. How do you feel if you were me? She is the favorite person in your life. She die, you thought she's in peace. Even the body cannot stay in peace.

Q. Cause the wolves ate the body, at least half the body...

A. Yes. And attacked the body, tear apart. And the other worst thing is the fabric that I wrap my mother, I saw somebody else using it.

Q. You saw someone else wearing it.

A. Not wears, using it. It's just the piece of the beautiful fabric that you can use to be, you know, you can made to be--on that time they use the scarf, a lot of scarf because it very hot. And it's just you had nothing--I don't know, on that time I don't know how do I react, O.K. First of all I saw somebody, I thought, "That is the fabric that I wrap my mother with." O.K.? "How do that guy got that?"

Before you ask that guy, the other guy come over, "The wolf will steal your mother body." I don't know how anybody would feel, but I feel kind of...I don't know shocked, or angry, or what, but it just feel like, I will get you someday, I will get who did this to me. But you look at the people who use that fabric that my mother--it's just a person that you just do like this. They would die. Very weak, very thin, it's disgusting look. It's more than--rather to be die than to be in that situation. Who do you get angry at the rules? I cannot attack them. And I cannot even have the energy to put my mother body back in peace, because already tear apart. And that is the nightmare that I still have right now.

I figured out she die by broken heart, at least she die in peace. When her body gone, even though it's not. One of the parts of the culture, sometime they would go back to bury the body and have another ceremony again. I cannot do that, because even I go, I don't know where all the body gone. I don't even remember where I bury my mother--oh, my father. I remember where I buried my mother, but I don't know where did I bury my father. I don't know where did I bury my sister. And even I do know, the place, it probably all full of...ghost town by now. I couldn't even remember. But the nightmare that I have right now is the way that my mother die is not the way that human being die. It's just like animal. Another animal attacks end by. I don't know.

One thing my sister and me, we been send the money to Cambodia to try to, you know, have the ceremony to give to the spirit of my parent. It's still I never rest, because that is always in my mind. I keep picture the group of wolf that tears the body apart. And I never stay in peace, because every time I think about it, I just feel like she's such a very sweet, very nice person, I mean...it's hard. I don't know how to explain to you how I feel, but I am very, very angry, and very sorry for my mother. Even she doesn't feel it, but you can feel like to see something that you want her to have the last day, and she cannot even have it. She couldn't even have her body in peace. It's all tear apart. But for one while I keep thinking of myself when we go to do the farm the other place, you know when you dig the ground you start to grow something all over again, you go through skeleton. The body been buried over there. And you take it out anyway, and you have to grow the all kind of thing that they want you to grow. And I figured out, even my mother, she didn't even been destroyed by the wolf on that time, she would probably get destroyed by human being also, because look at the body. So many body that you been, you know, you club the ground and you want to grow something, you see the body, skeleton over there. You see all kind of leg, all kind of--you know, it's just, I don't know. It's just a...to me I think hell is just a work, but to live in there, I been through hell in real life. And talking about that...I never forgive *Pol Pot* regime for did that to my parent. I never forgive that. Never.

I bury my son. No, my brother buried my son. They are men. They dig the ground deeper than me, I mean nice and safe. I cannot bury my mother, because on that time I'm very, very weak, and I just do about one feet under the ground. It seems to be it's not strong enough, but I never have any kind of thing to

do exactly what I--the tradition do. O.K., instead of a beautiful flower, I make like...I remember my daughter before I wrap her. I wrap her with three or four piece of pumpkin flowers, that to hold in her hand. And some of them I just cut, you know it's some kind of weed, because it more traditional like when you die, you put flower on the body. And sometime you just place down flower like that with the flower in your hand, or like a...(speaks in Khmer to Svang. ST: Incense)...incense or the candle in you hand to mean you go nice in peace. I didn't even have that. I remember my son, he, when he die he turn...he turn black, because there are nothing, no blood in his body at all. I didn't even...I have--I cannot even have anything for him to hold. It's just a piece of grass that I put on his hand and bury him. And him, I bury him in a special...a special kind of skirt that I have. You know, wrap him and, you know, bury him.

So to the way almost everybody dies in *Pol Pot*, they didn't do half way the way you bury the animal in this country. You didn't do like that. You do worse than the animal. And I can't see...(under her breath) I'm so angry...I cannot see why--why, how come I--I cannot see why I still alive and let that thing curse me sometime, because it's just so horrible to see to hurt. Special to my mother, to hurt her to see like--to see her blouse, to see her skirt had been tear up. I feel so sorry, I should go back and to bury the body again, but I'm so weak, and I'm afraid to go. You know it's just the memory that I'm still blaming myself until now. And I think that fear still not just me, I mean, in that time my sister and me are, we are about probably--it's hard to walk, but we more like...at least we can bury our mother. Sometime they wouldn't--nobody to bury. They die in the house and they just stay over there, you know. But, it's a fear to see the way I let my parent and my children die, and to bury them. It's still bothering me until now, because on that time you can compare the other person. You see the way stupid *Pol Pot* die. You see the way they held a special cover for the parent. The way they designed it, and the way they dig the ground, how deep it is. And they ask you to bury them for them. You know what I'm saying, to bury their family for them, and stand and look at the body your mother you cannot even bury her deep enough. Is that answer the question? (RM: Yeah.) It's just--*Pol Pot* is just a hell that you know exactly--you don't know what you doing, but you been through that.

Q. In Cambodian culture how do you say hell, I mean in Cambodian?

A. *Norrork. Norrork.*

Q. *Norrork.*

SP: N-O-R-R-O-R-K? *Norrork*. It means hell. So I saw my mother, I mean our whole family been through hell together. Except...well, except I hope they are in peace now. I don't know. In my mind I still feel like, I would love very much to bury them again, but it's too late for me and late forever, because it's no way

that I can find their body together. One thing would warn the other thing that I know, it helped myself, I figured out, "So what. She doesn't feel it. She doesn't know about it. Her mind is with me." She's the one who tell me, "Body, it's just the thing that support the soul." Her soul is gone. Her soul is in so peace and give me a way, "*Sophan*, keep on going. Life has a lot to offer. Don't give up yet." One thing they asking me, looks around me at that time, everybody had the same boat, except worse.

Q. Do you think the soul of your family is at peace now, whether you felt they're at peace now?

A. To me...

Q. You're mother, your daughter, and your son...

A. Her word is still with me, but her soul...Sometime Doctor, sometime. I feel like they are gone nice in peace right now. They are in heaven. But in the dream I still saw the hunger. I see the dream in a hunger look. I see the starvation. Sometime I woke up in a nightmare that I mixed my life between the past *Pol Pot* regime and American living style right now. Like sometime I saw my mother come over, and she said like, "I cannot find anything to eat. Look at you. Why can't you give me some?" And then make me thinking about. This is one thing that I never ever let--I always have to stay in my religion. According to my religion, this is seemed to be the bad is still somewhere, and see the action of what you do. This is the time you supposed to do--this is the time of year that you supposed to do something, pray for your parent, do something for the temple, let the monk pray to them, you know what I'm saying? When I dream about my mother, she's looking for more food. I figured out some way, somehow she probably still hungry. She's not in peace yet.

Q. And the monk can help you with this and help your mother's spirit with this thing?

A. To the...sometime it does help. You know, when you do something that you believe it does seem to go away. Like last year my sister call me the middle of the night. She say, "I dream about mom. She look awful, and she's very hungry." And we tried to get together and cook food, and we pray for them. And seem to--at least we can do. We feel better after. And right now this is a close time we call together...(speaks to Svang in Khmer. ST: Ancestor ceremony.)...Yeah! Ancestor ceremony. This is the time of the year that you, you make the ceremony for the people who are dead. Why don't I do that anymore, I don't know. I still do, I still--instead of cook myself, I give the money to the monk, and I pray for them. But to me, or maybe I become more American, I don't know, I don't like holiday. I don't like with that, because I end up alone. If I go to the temple, I go in a group of everybody who are very happy, who do everything together? When I come home,

I come home alone. And I hate to be alone after I came from the party. I hate to be so lonesome. Tonight we have very big party at the big club. So many friends ask me to go, but I hate to come home alone. This is one thing that I start to cut off the party or the ceremony every year, little by little, and to getting less and less--start to separate my life a little bit apart from them. I think the older I am, the more I want to be--the past bother me more and more and more. Except I'm a little bit stronger to fight back, to take it, instead of let it goes. You know what I'm saying, instead of run away from it, I learn how to take it easier than before. But the older I am, the past start to bother me. And the more they bother me, I keep--kind of little bit stronger, because from the experience I learn a little bit stronger, and stronger to fight back with the past. Instead of run away from it, I live with it. Sometime, when I dream about my mother, I just woke up and talk to myself. I say, "Well mom, you tell me to do, what to do, and now I'm doing it. O.K.? Who know about the future?" I know she had a very bad life, but it's nothing I can do. I go to church, I pray for my parent. I go to the temple, I pray for my parent. To me, I don't believe much about die, death. I think death; it's just gone. But the memory, and the dream is keep let me decide maybe she's alive--maybe her spirit, or maybe her soul still want to see the action, to see how I'm doing...or how I'm suffering. But the other hand, for the science figured out it's nothing for you to believe about that. How can you believe that thing? But if I don't believe--the dream, it make me do that.

Q. So the spirit, I mean memory is the spirit, that's what you're saying...(P: Yes.) So your mother is still alive...

A. To me, yes. She's still alive. She's still--I mean...I still yell and I still scream. There are a lot of thing that we--like I said from the beginning, me and my mother are very close together, and sometime when I have a problem I said like, "Mom, you tell me after my husband gone for years, you said, 'I'm guarantee for two years, you probably get married,'" because she know I'm a very attractive lady, and sooner or later I'm going to get married. And I tell mom, I say, "No. I would wait until the day he comes." I tell her, "Maybe I been wait for too long, mother." Because--my mother, she's very modern. She's a modern, you know, very--compared to her generation, she's the very modern lady, because she wants you to do everything more like fashionable. The way you dress, the way you act, and everything. And my father, he's very, very old fashion guy. You know, and I figured out if my mother alive right now and to see what I'm doing right now, she probably very proud of me. (RM: She'd be very proud, yeah.) Yeah. But she also very worry why do I waste my time so much to be so alone, because she never want me to be alone.

Q So maybe you have to solve this problem.

A. Say that again.

Q. Maybe you have to solve this problem. Your mother's telling you to solve this problem. (SP laughs) I mean, you know, you have to solve this problem. What do you think? Maybe you're ready now. What do you think?

A. I don't know. I would take my time.

Q. You're not going to listen to your mother now?

A. I do listen to her so...

Q. O.K., so maybe you have to solve this problem now.

A. I let the problem come to me. (Laughs)

Q. O.K. Well you can't wait forever though, right? You're mother's giving you good advice. Maybe at some point you're going to have to solve this problem.

A. Well, like I said, In Cambodian old land they say like, "Is he the good pair for you? He always comes." You know? Is he very...*Kou Preng*...

Q. *Kou Preng*, you're looking for a *Kou Preng*, sure, right...

A. *Kou Preng*, yes. And what I said like, I don't think I have any period, so maybe I have to wait until god create one for me.

Q. Yeah, but I met a Cambodian woman, and she said to me, she says, "I'm waiting for my *Kou Preng*." I said, "Where?" She said, "I never leave the house, but he lives right down the street. He'll know I'm in here, he'll knock on the door." (SP laughs) And I said, "This is very interesting." My mother's not worried either. I never have to leave the house. The *Kou Preng* will show up."

A. Well, according to the...

Q. You don't have to help the *Kou Preng* along? I mean just a...

A. Well, it's like I said it's depend, because in Cambodia would be like man would have the right to choose the woman. In this country the woman have a right to choose man too. Maybe the *Kou Preng* that I thought, you know, is coming, doesn't the way I like it, so I probably refuse him also. I don't know, but to me I probably figured out I feel...I shouldn't say comfortable, I feel lonesome sometime, but...My life, it seem straight, you know, with love you have up and down. Happiness, sad, jealousy, worry, you kind of--we call life. That's what life for. And for me it seems to be stable.

Q. Sure. Why risk the next step, because you could have more misery, instead of more happiness? Right now you're doing fine, so why try something different?

A. Yeah. This is talking about four out of the three--you know, seven days a week--four out of the three day I feel like that; nice and smooth my life, I stable, so don't harass. Take your time, and take it easy. Enjoy what you have. But three out of the four you feel like, *Sophan*, you' re getting old now. You want to have what you used to have before. You should act it now."

Q. Sure. But don't you think lives a journey? I mean, you know, you're a young woman, you have many more miles to walk, and don't you think?

A. Life is too short for me. Maybe I would die tomorrow, maybe next week. (RM: Too short, yeah, right.) You never know. And the thing is--and also it's married is the very serious thing to do. If I only know I will get married again and probably divorce for a few more years, why do I bother? But, they say "no pain, no gain." If I wouldn't try, I wouldn't know how life would be.

Q. Well, one of my Cambodian friends said to me, they said, "When you walk around the block," right, say you walk around the block, "you don't know what's on the other side." It could be paradise, or a truck could hit you.

A. Or you could get killed.

Q. Right. Is that true? I mean you have no idea.

A. Right, yeah. But one thing is, I think being a human being, you have to have love in your heart. You don't have love, you not a human being. Life is creating by happiness, sad, exciting, unexciting, boring; that is create to be life. Sometime when the life getting so disgust, I figured out that is to my--this is what this life going to be. I mean you have to miss everything to become life. For me, it's always one after another. Last week I taking care of my insurance, I take care of my mortgage, all of the sudden feel, O.K., I seem to can be relax right now, and all of the sudden, one of the guy hit my car, O.K. And I searching out, I found here insurance which is problem I been taking care of. When I go to work, I got flat tire. And I figured out, why me? I mean, god don't you dare get enough? But this is life. You always have something to interrupt, but you always have something to look forward to. But I never chose if I happen to live, to reborn again and know my past life and my life right now, I never want to be alone. Never. It just kind of very scary situation to be lonesome, but I never want to marry with a, you know, unstable married also, because...according to what I been through, according to what I brought up, it's just...love is just one for one, one person for one person. I don't think I have that kind of love in this country, or

maybe I didn't look hard enough. But... I see so many people the way they cheating, the way...Maybe she's right. Instead of get married again, she settle down for being single. But there are no meanings. To be single for what? For be alone and stay home all the time, going to work all the time, for what? I have no answer for that, but the thing is I just hope someday my life would be different, a little bit more excited, instead of be so dark like that. Don't you think?

ST: I don't know. (Everyone chuckles)

Q. You don't want to get...

## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 5

Q. And we're talking to ST. (ST: SP.) SP, excuse me, that's right, SP. And this is Svang Tor and Dr. Mollica conducting the interview. Last week you told us about your story, what happened to you under the Communist? Today what we'd like to do is focus on the practices of the *Pol Pot* regime, in other words, like focusing on how these people behaved, and trying to understand what they were thinking, and why they were doing what they were doing. So we have a series of questions and they have to do about work, and health care and things like that. So for instance, how did the communists, the *Pol Pot* people organize work in the camps you were in?

A. Organize work. They are very hard worker. They do work like a machine, because they do believe--no, they were born with a very, very hard worker. They are very hard worker. They are not just telling you to do, and they didn't do it. Most of the thing they do it with you.

Q. So the communists themselves--you see part of the myth, impression I had was that the communists were using the work to torture the people, in other words to kill the people...

A. Oh, you mean to kill the people?

Q. I mean in other words, like, you see the movie "The Killing Field", you know, the people would get up at four o'clock in the morning, and then work till midnight, you know work till late at night. Now did you experience that? What was the workday like for you?

A. It's the same...we woke up in the morning voices overlap.

Q. What time would you?

A. At four o'clock, go to--we take a long walk, about two or three hour, two or three hour to the farm. And we got over there, and we start to work until twelve o'clock. We have lunch. Twelve o'clock lunch--no, twelve o'clock at lunchtime, and we have about one hour lunch. We come back again about one o'clock, work until five. Is that right? Work until five, and come home and rest about five to seven o'clock. This is, we're talking about dinner, right? To seven o'clock, and go back again, work until between ten or eleven o'clock. (ST speaking, but sometimes 10 or 11 o'clock.) If the worker is still night, you work until eleven o'clock. But it's sometime, when it's rain or something, like it's very wet so you cannot stay long, so you come at ten.

Q. Was this the way the farmer, the Cambodian farmer usually works?

A. No. The Cambodian farmer, regular farmer did not work that hard. Of course they woke up in the morning very early, like six or seven o'clock. This was according to my parent who was a farmer also. And you work from seven or eight o'clock until one or two o'clock. You have lunch--no until ten or eleven o'clock you have lunch. You come home, you have lunch, and you go back around three or four o'clock, and come home around five or six o'clock. That's all. It's very, very different from a farmer life.

Q. So why did you think they organized work this way? What was the purpose of it?

A. Because the purpose is they want everybody to work hard, because they figured out, they don't believe machine, they don't believe...I think the way they do, they punish us. They do the punishment. Is that you call it that? (RM: Yeah.) Because they figured out--it's just kind of jealousy or anger, because most of the people who are...they brought over there, they don't know nothing about farmer, special like me. I never see the farmer, I never see the...(speaks in Khmer to Svang.)...A field? The rice field? (ST: A rice field or paddy.) Yeah. I didn't even know that stuff. And I didn't know how to grow rice. I don't know, because I was born in a different society.

Q. Now were the--the things I haven't been able to understand is the thought that the communists who were farmers, did they work like that too? I mean say I was a communist farmer...what was it...

A In the same time, in the time when they trained you or the time before they held the power?

Q. No. I mean, say that I was a farmer and I supported the Khmer Rouge, would I be treated that way too? I mean were there any communist who were working those days that way?

A. No. Very few who would--they would give them the power to lead you, O.K.? But those people who's not very important, like the leader of the group would work, doesn't work hard like you. It just, they probably come to show you one or three hour. And they come back; they had some other thing to do. You don't know what they doing. But some who is the leader of the small group, like combine, like take care of ten or twelve people would work very hard like you. But those people they pick from one of us, not the Khmer Rouge. (Voices overlap.)

Q. I see! They weren't Khmer Rouge.

A. Yes. O.K.

Q. Who were these--one of the things I've never been able to figure out, is that, could you tell who the Khmer Rouge were? I mean were they average people, farming people, I mean who were--they were poor people?

A. Poor and uneducated.

Q. Uneducated. Mostly they were farmers before the...

A. Mostly they are farmers, mostly from where I been through is the guy--most people who are the murder...like who been kill somebody, who been rob...(RM: So some of them are criminals?) Yes, criminal, and they try to escape from the jail, and they live in the jungle, and they try to build up their family, and by the time they grow up in that--On that time communists just give them weapon, give them power, and that's why they get...

Q. Did you meet any educated Khmer Rouge? I mean did you meet...

A. Very few, but those guy who would kill, got kill after two or three year after I been in communist regime. They kill each other also.

Q. Yes. Did you have an experience at all? I mean now, with all this work was there tons of food? I mean...

A. No. There were tons of food for them, but none for us. Tons of food for them because we work very hard. We grow all the vegetable. We grow all the rice. We do a lot of thing, but we cannot use them, we cannot touch them. We have to steal from our own, the own fruit that we been grow on, because everything that you put on the ground belong to the regime. You cannot touch unless you got the agreement from the whole group. You know what I'm saying? Like everything that you do, you do for the group, and you cannot touch it.

Q. So when the Cambodians in 1975 came into Thailand, most were starving, where were they are starving from? They were starving from these camps, in other words, were they starving...

A. 1975?

Q. 1979, excuse me.

A. O.K. 1975 they starving in the camp?

Q. No. Most of the Cambodians, who came into Thailand in 1979, were dying of starvation. The Vietnamese came, and then they fled into Thailand. Were these

people who had fled into Thailand starving, because they had had nothing to eat for four years, or...did the starvation come from...

A. For myself it's different.

Q. When you went into Thailand you weren't starving...

A. I wasn't, because most people who escape from Thailand, from the same the generation I escape, you know, they have something that they took from *Pol Pot* when *Pol Pot* runs out. You took it with you. But I think some--I don't know about starvation, but we live in a camp, we got some rice, right?

Q. When you first went into the camps in 1979, weren't a lot of people dying in the camps though, from starvation and disease?

A. I think the disease, and from the weakness. We got there--because I'm not the first person who came to the camp. I mean they have so many grous who came before me. So it must be on then, it must be then we don't have any care, UNICEF, or care to support yet--or Red Cross to support yet. By the time I came, we got all kind of help from all over the world. Is that answer your question?

Q. Yeah.

A. Is you right, because if those people who been there before I did, they must have died by starvation, because no way they cannot find food. Or even they have a little bit with them, they cannot survive.

Q. So either in the *Pol Pot* camps there's a lot of food, it's just that people couldn't eat it.

A. Well, a lot of food, but the food there are no nutrition. It's just the rice and a salt fish, that's all. Nothing. I mean, most the people have swelling problem like my brother, because all you can eat--you had plenty of food to eat--just rice...

Q. In the camp or you mean in Cambodia? In the refugee camp or in Cambodia itself? You had rice and fish in Cambodia? Is that...(voices overlap)...Under *Pol Pot*, what were you eating under *Pol Pot*?

A. Under *Pol Pot*?

Q. Yeah.

A. No. Well we...in the *Pol Pot* regime, this is what the question is, in *Pol Pot* regime, no. We never have good food to eat at all. What they do like, I don't know you ever see, like they call rice soup? It's just like you put like, one

example you put one tablespoon of rice boiled with two big cup of water. Is that right? And it's very watery. It's just mixed with rice, and they give you to eat. And they go by the generation. You are very hard worker...(phone rings, break in tape)...worker, or they like you well, they like you well, they would--you know the way you pour the rice? They have a different--I have to show you that, because...(break in tape)...They have a more share for you, like each adult they cannot have more than two or more than three. O.K.? If they like you very well, they like you, they would do it from the bottom and gently lift them up so you got most rice instead of water. They give it to you, O.K.? If they don't like you, before they give that food to you, they stir it, O.K. That makes more water than rice. You got three they serve to other people, but mostly water. Compared to the other guy that they like or they know well, you got about one teaspoon of rice, or one tablespoon of rice. And the other person got three, four tablespoon of rice, but we work hard the same. But they just don't like you. O.K.? The food you eat mostly with--they would mix with everything. They mix with, I don't know what kind of...I got *Tror Kuon*, banana tree, how do you call *Tror Kuon* (ST: morning glory that goes with the...) Yeah. Morning glory, and you, in Cambodia sometime you can eat the baby banana tree, but in *Pol Pot* regime they doesn't care about baby or not. They just cut the banana tree and make soup for you. The soup is just so little banana with two or three fish over there. Just make believe and give it to you. It like, even they feed their pet better than they feed you people, in that time, because I see the way they feed their pig much better than they feed...

Q. They feed the pig better than people....

A. Yeah. In the *Pol Pot* regime in the same time, some people would steal the pig food to feed their family. This is exactly the same time, not before, not after, you follow me? Or they would feed their cat or their pet, cat or dog, better than the way they treat you. What do they believe? They believe they rather to save the cow life. They're not going to save your life, because you had nothing to do with the society. If you die, so what? If you alive, you are the slave. You have nothing compared to their society, O.K. If they--if somebody bring them one cow, they would trade for ten people in the group. They would trade for one cow, and give away the ten people, human beings. Is that answer your question?

Q. Yeah, yeah. What was the--did you have any spare time? When you were working, were you able to do things without rest, or relax, or recover from the hard day's work?

A. For one hour you have to make your own time. After lunch you rest a little bit. Depend if you have the very good leader, nice leader, understanding, you probably can rest a little rest a little bit, like, instead of one hour, you can rest two hour. In the group have to be together, have to be, you know, very quiet, have to be very private, or in the evening you have to make your own fun. You have to make your

own time. Like me one day that we do the canal. We dig the canals I'm so tired on that day. My shoulder is full of (speaks in Khmer to Svang)...the thing that you can carry...it's like a swing. It's like a scale. O.K., like a scale that you put the...(RM: A yoke, they call it.)...A yoke, yes. One day, I'm just so exhausted on that day. And that happened two day after my little son died. I come to work with a big heavy stuff. You know like a big pile, a big hill like that? I sit over there. I'm very, very dark and very quiet, because on the other hill, the other side of the canal is the place they kill the people, and they just dig it and how do you say (speaks in Khmer to Svang. ST: Bury.)...Bury over there on the other side. And when I'm so tired, I sit down and lie on the part of the big pile of the dirt, you know after you keep pulling and pulling to become to be a canal. Like this big, a big yoke on my shoulder, and I don't know when I fall to sleep, or maybe I gone, I don't know. The thing I remember, I just woke up, and I cannot move, because over my head and over my shoulder is full of the ground. You follow me? Like I said like this, first of all I try to rest, O.K.? Sit like this, and all the time, all of the sudden I must have fall to sleep, or I must be so tired, and by the time I woke up I miss my dinner. I didn't go back home, and nobody knows they miss a whole person, they don't know. When I woke up I couldn't move. But on that time, you don't care if somebody would die in front of you. You not scared, because you see so many die right in front of you. It just smell kind of funny smell, woke me up in the--you know, and I feel like in the kind of dreaming. I cannot move. And I shake myself up, when I wake up. Three o'clock in the morning I am all by myself. In a big pile of dirt cover my head, my shoulder, and I can't even move because I have a big yoke--you know like I had a yoke right in front of this shoulder. And its full of dirt, and I cannot move. And right in front of me I can see so many...so many like small little thing like when they bury the people over there after they kill. And I woke up, it seemed to be that kind of--first of all I feel kind of frightened and chill, O.K.? And I woke up and cannot move, so I have to get up myself. Then I knew I must have fall to sleep. Or I must be too tired. And I bury, and I try to dig out my yoke, and, you know, everything come back. And it's too late to go to where I used to stay, because very, not walk. And it's so quiet to be here all alone, very frightened. If somebody wants to kill me, nobody would know. Even they know; they wouldn't care. So in the same time I have to make my own self continue my sleeping again, even I afraid. I come back, and I sleep on the knee of the canal. Sleep over there until five o'clock in the morning, everybody start to come, and I got a very nice compliment from my supervisor. "My good," they say, "you such a very good communist people because you been here so early more than anybody." I didn't say anything. I have to take that as a yes, actually because I fall to sleep since when. That is the story that I never, never forget. Not many people who are so different from me. They probably go to, you know something they just go to rest and try to rest little bit, and they never wake up.

Q. They never wake up again, right?

A. Yeah. They never wake up again, because I think it's that is over do or over tired, because...

Q. Well do you think--were people afraid of that, of going to sleep, that they would die in their sleep? I mean did you ever have that fear?

A. Well, on that condition you don't have anything to eat, die doesn't scare you at all.

Q. Doesn't scare you at all...

A. No. We used to say love means more than anything else, O.K.? They said like...love would drive you crazy, you afraid of lost love and afraid to die. In that situation you don't care if you die. You doesn't--you feel like if you die so what? So you alive, so what? You have no meaning for your life. You work hard like a dog.

Q. Your life has no meaning then?

A. No. And it's just not me. The thing is, one thing that if you ask, they ask me why on that time your children keep dying, and you still work for other, with other. When you look around yourself, everybody on the same boat.

Q. That's right.

A. O.K. You see everybody killing, everybody dying. You always see--this is the way I put myself into. I look for something the worse. I figured out my two children die of starvation, of course the no body killed them. I saw the baby was born, and they got killed with no reason by knife, by gun. I figured that at least my children die in peace in my hand. It's a horrible thing to compare, but do I have a choice? So to hear the baby cry without mother and die, nobody can touch that baby. I figures out my baby died under, you know, kind of love that I hold them tight until the day they die.

(Somebody sneezes)

Q. So you had a situation where you heard a baby cry, an d it just died, is that right?

A. They killed the mother, because the mother, she is, I think she have a problem is the prostitute or some reason, I don't know. Sometime they just name the story for kills her with no reason. And then they kill the mother; the baby is over there. Nobody afraid--nobody want to touch it. Even you who want to take care of the baby, but they wouldn't let you. Here the baby, three months old baby, who have no, nothing to do with the world, have nothing to do, know nothing, who cry until

they die after they kill the mother. Who would help that baby? Me? How can I? I have to support myself too. If I lay my hand on that baby, she would probably protect the enemy. You are one of the enemies also. This is what I'm talking about, they are very stupid uneducated people that they will train, because if the politic tell them they if they're been greet by people who do something wrong against their rule is stupid, it's wrong, they would believe that. You know what I'm saying? Like the computer you set up. They don't have a brain to think, like a robot. You only think about what you been learning from, but you never use the brain, you never use the brain. And to live with that kind of people, to live with that kind of society, live and die it doesn't mean anything. You feel like--some people probably said like, "Why don't you get together and kill those people?" Who would protect you, because those people, they feel hopeless themselves. And on that time I never--imagine most people right now when you sit like in this position, would you remember a knee taller than a ear? You know what I'm saying? When we are so tired, we have nothing to eat even when we sit like this. We have nothing over here right on the, over here. Its just skeleton, O.K, You can see everywhere you go you can see people sit like this. They not do that anymore, they do like this, because the knee getting up to here, because they have no.. It's just the skin, a skeleton. You follow what--you understand me? Most of the people you can see, sit on the street just like this. Like it's just the ghost town. Everywhere I go, I see the ghost town. Even you die, you alive, you live in the ghost town anyway. Life doesn't mean a thing. And the way they treat you be worse than animal. Right now, to me, I feel so...every time I talk about it I feel so angry about that stupid, stupid politic and stupid, stupid kind of regime that I never, never in my life to hear, to see such a stupid thing like that. Some they just let them die by starvation. Even though they don't let you die by starvation, they say that they going to kill you, but they don't give anything for you to eat except used you. Some people would know that kind of root would kill you when you eat it, but you so hungry. You have nothing else beside that to eat. You eat grass. You eat everything. Some people would eat a little frog alive, because they want to survive. Some people would eat the worm. I see all kind of people who die. Sometime by the time they put you by starvation for so long, and they want you to die by eating. For two or three week that you have nothing to eat but water, they make a very delicious food for you to eat, not delicious, just rice and a piece of meat. People eat, eat until the day they...they eat, eat they never want to stop until they die right over there. I also see the way they kill people like that too.

Q. You mean they would starve you, and then give you too much food, and the food would kill you?

A. Yes. And you ever see any human being would do that to other human being? This is the persons, they are very innocent. They are student. All they have is just the student education. They are teacher education. They are well educated than them. I don't know, maybe where you live is different from where I am, but I live

such a very rude. *Maung* District is such as very… I don't know it's worse than animal. I can see they kill their own mother. I mean talking about *Pol Pot* themselves, because their mother try to be like, she's more like...old, she more like old people. And she, you know, willing to spend food, some little bit food for other. And her son, he become to be a soldier, and he really like his power so much. And they say, "Your mother has been feeding the enemy. She's not your mother anymore. If she is your mother, she would do everything for the rule or for the society." That guy would set up somebody to kill his own mother, because his own mother is not his mother anymore. He's not belonging from his mother son. He's the regime, the stupid rule son...

Q. You saw this happen, I mean kill his/her own mother, or you heard this story?

A. He didn't kill his own mother, but he set up somebody else to kill his mother.

Q. You saw this stuff?

A. I didn't see the way they kill, but I heard. But I knew she's died.

Q. These people, I mean, did they take pleasure in torturing the people like this? Could you see it on their faces, or could you tell that this made them happy?

A. They want...they are like us, but the way they talk, it's so different. They don't have the sweetness or the friendly tone of voice. You only talk like a recorder. They like us. They love their own family, but between us they act so different.

Q. Because you were their enemy.

A. Yes. They act like...They are very good father. They are very good husband. I don't know what good or bad, but because on that time--but I knew that they liked their children. I saw they hold their children. They play around with their children. But I figured out if they have the father heart, the father mind, why they kill the other babies? If you were a father, you had the father mind. You wouldn't kill other babies; because you figured that that's like my baby too. If I say he more like a father life style...but he love his own children. One of the children got die by kind of disease or something, he cry like a hell, but for other baby he doesn't care. It's hard for me to see, to say, and also the mother also. When I bury my daughter, some mother would say, well, she's die young it's better than she suffer for longer. Which is right, but no matter what you don't want your children to dye. Two or three days later, her children have very high temperature, and look at her. She couldn't even walk straight. She go everywhere looking for help for her daughter. It's not the time for revenge, but I cannot help myself. I say, "Now you have been through exactly what I been through. Your daughter's not really die yet. You have mother heart like me, but you don't care about other." I do care about

other baby. I feel so sorry for the young child who are very innocent, who know nothing about this world and become to be a victim. So I cannot answer that question. I don't know they have mother heart or father heart, I don't know. But they do love their own family. Does that answer the question?

Q. Yeah. Well that's what I was--you answered the question I was going to ask. So you did witness the relationship between them and their children? (SP: Yeah.) And what about the question of health or hygiene, I mean the personal hygiene, for instance, the...Under that regime were you able to take care of your body in any way, clean your hair, wash yourself, or...

SP; Yes. I still have time to do that. Like you go to take a shower--not take a shower, you know, take a bath, but it's very dirty water. On that time I think everybody had lice in their hair, because you had no soap. You do have it, but also sometime you don't have time. But it seems to be like everybody like everybody. But you still no matter the way you neat, you still neat, I still cannot go to bed without washing my, you know, my foot or my feet or my hand before I go to bed. I still do that, and so does my family, because we are raised up like that. But some people, it's just they don't do it. It's still like, I don't know, no matter how neat you are. You still should be some certain way that you still find the time to take care of yourself. If you are sloppy, no matter you have much time, you never bother to taking care. And it the same way you dress up also. The way you dress up even I found out most of we call...we are the slaves. The way we dress up even we dress up their costume, we still look better than them. I think it just.... the attitude or the way--I couldn't figure it out. I remember first time they talking about, maybe my long hair that attract their husband, right? In the group, they say if I don't cut my hair, I'm going to be in trouble. So I cut my hair very short. Then they find the other reason, because short hair, it brought out more beauty, O.K.? Then I come home, I tell my father, "They want me to cut my hair. Now I did cut my hair. I still have--now another problem come up, because the short hair would bring your face more beauty." You didn't even know, you never have time to do your make-up or anything at all, all you do you just dress up the way they give you to do. Black, they said, "black, it's not good on her, because it makes her skin look better." So I would give--got any color that dull and kind of stupid color, like mix everything in. But no matter what you do, you cannot help it. It's just the nature you were brought up like that. So on that times my father cut my hair like--you know he cut everything just to make me look ugly. You know, it's like somebody getting angry and cut, you know, like play around with your hair. It does help for a while, but for two or three week the hair start to grow up, and it comes the same shape again. No matter what you do, you feel--they still find something wrong with you. One thing to my father--grateful to my father, one day I fainted, and I broke all my three teeth in front, O.K. After that, thanks to dad it's save my life. Without a dad, I probably die a long time ago.

Q. Why is that?

A. Because after you have--I think the beauty of the woman when you talk and you smile, because you have even teeth. And I have no three teeth in front, its make a big hole; it does make you look different when you talk. O.K.? And my father said, "That is good for you, because from now on they not going to do thing to you, because they not going to be after you anymore." O.K.? From that time, I go to work, of course I have less problem, then somebody start to, you know, like spy on me, but I create another problem. The skin tone is always different from their skin tone, because you brought up--with this kind of skin when you are under the sun for so long, you turn red or turn pink, or peach. They have very bad skin. No matter how hot or--it still the same. Then they start to figure out, maybe you use the make-up, and nay is you use something to, you know, to attract still people. You don't. My sister almost got killed because of that, because she had very white skin like her. When she goes to work, her cheek, it's turn very pretty and peach. So she cut her hair like...black hair, white face and pink cheek. It attracts the people. We probably had nothing, no romance you cannot find. You couldn't even have the hormones to other. But they still do, because they have enough food to eat. They didn't work hard like us. But we don't. We don't have any hormone. Husband and wife become more like friend. They never sleep together. They never have time to make love. But for them they still have children every year, because they eat more than us. Or even sometime the baby die, we don't have time to take care--we don't have time to take care the baby, the baby die. It's a big opposite. So they...I don't know this is answer the question or not, but the thing is, make the story short, yes, we still have time, we still find time to take care of ourselves. To clean, to be washed, the way we eat, the way we eat, and it's still neat. No matter what, we still find the time to do that.

Q. And even though the water was filthy whatever, you still felt it was important to wash?

A. Yes. It important to wash, important to boil, or important to...like you drain the water or save the water for overnight until they soak the...We still have time to do that. Yeah.

Q. What about, for instance, around being a woman under these conditions, I mean for instance, what would happen to a woman around her menstrual period? How would women deal with pregnancy and things like that? I mean, sort of their reproductive issues...

A. From the beginning, from 1976, like most of my country, when the woman is pregnant, they normally give everything to her when she feel like--you know, like morning sick, you want something to eat, some kind of strange food to eat. In 1975 to 1976 where I live, they used to make sure the pregnancy woman got what

she wanted, at least close to what she wanted. But after 1977 they don't care. They treat you like--no, I didn't see any pregnancy, not many pregnancy at all...because one thing they know, they separate husband and wife; husbands live in a group of men, women live in group of women are the same ages. O.K. You want to be together, at least you have to know somebody well, or you have to have good gold, give it to them. And even those people, they are pregnant, they don't have much of the problem, because they still have gold to expect for good food. I cannot tell you much about how do they handle pregnancy on that time, because most of the people in my group, nobody pregnant. But I see the way they married--the way they carried their pregnancy, they do the same, because they still find the way to do it. But I think husband and wife, like I said; they have their hormone just gone. You wouldn't believe. Even now, somebody tell me, I wouldn't believe it either, like husband and wife become to be just buddy, no sex, no romance, nothing. And even my parent, I never--well, you never have find time to be romantic at all, or to be have a relationship together, because you already in the same home. Talking about home, you sleep from here to there (demonstrating). You sleep with twenty-one people. Where's the time you can find the time to make love? And how do you get the energy to make love, because you think even can walk yourself, wake up by yourself yet? Every body, even you try to get up, you cannot do like this. (Demonstrates) You have to do like this. Is that right? O.K., and the way you walk, your talking about, you walk like this. (Demonstrates) You cannot be walk straight like this. Most people who are so big, instead of woke up like this, you hold on to something tall. Then you can see how big they are. By the time they give you a little bit more food to eat, we talking about when they start to change the politic between *Heng Samrin* no, I still confuse *Ieng Sary* and *Khiev Samphorn*. I don't know which of it the stupid politic. After--for a while, I think in 1978, we got more food. We start to eat like rice. You know, more like regular rice, like we eat right now. It's a amount that we can almost eat enough. We can get almost enough food to eat. But in the mean time, in the spare time, during break time if somebody knows how to go to crab, they let other...the crabs. Not any animal can run across of us. We eat rat. We eat all kind of things: rabbit, which is, rabbit everybody eat...snake, (speaks in Khmer to Svang. ST: cricket.), we eat crickets. We eat the...insect, but it's the bug, the green color. You know what I'm talking about, all kind of things like that's be alive. There is...all kind of frogs. They eat everything. They eat everything to survive. And besides that eating, we are stealing each other. Somebody would lies tell them I'm very sick, I cannot go to work. For so many times they let you stay home, even you are sick, you try to still that time looking for more crabs, snake, or do something to find food to eat. And by the time you come home, or you come to your room, you put everything underneath of the swing, somebody steal that away from you. Your food, you feel like, O.K., you're so tired to eat, and you leave over their fall to sleep. Woke up, the food is gone. That's happening everywhere. When they separate me from family after my two...after my mother and everybody die, it seem to be like, they put me in a what

we call a special group. I work very, very hard, but I also had a friend. He is the soldier, son soldier, O.K.? It's not a friend, but to me, he's a friend of mine, because he helps me in a one way that he hope someday I would sleep with him. O.K.? That he hides meat, a piece of meat and rice. It's nobody know except him and me. After work I go, you know, I tell them I have to go to the bathroom. I picked them up, and I eat sleeping, O.K. I couldn't--it's just so many people that wouldn't mind to sleep with anybody just for food. It's so many people who would get killed. So many woman who got killed, they have an affair with the soldier, she has to got food. It's so many woman who got raped because the food. It's...I don't know. It's just such a, so stupid society, every time I think about it. I saw three women who try to escape from where I live to come to Thailand, but they move, I think, too slow. They caught them. And they kill them. Those women got raped until they die. And before they die, they kill her, because they make she undress.

## Interview 9 - Part 6

Q. September 30, 1989. Now would they abuse, and rape women in public, I mean, or they do it in private?

A. No. Well, you can hear they screaming.

Q. You can hear them screaming.

A. Yeah. You hear the screaming, but you don't see the action, but you can hear by the screaming. It's not just rape...from the way they kill people too, because I knew, everybody knew rape, you know only younger. You can hear say, "Oh god, help me." And sometime you can see--you know, the dying sound? You can hear that. And sometime I can see when they come, when I stay in a hospital, they have a kind of stupid hospital that you can stay over there. I can see the soldier come soaking wet of blood. O.K.? Come over and ask you to give them water to clean the blood before they go home. You see that, and you got the picture, because they left you a half hour ago with a group of people. They come in full of blood. And you hear the screaming noise. I never see that, but I hear. I saw when they walk out, and I saw when he come back full of blood. I think it scared me the most when they walk the people over there. It doesn't scare me much the way I just saw that people. It's...look at this. Their stupid costume is black, O.K.? They are use red and white scarf, long scarf. They come in, it's blood--it's soaking wet. And you can tell. You know how many people they been killed, and they don't have any gun. They have a long, how do you call it? A *Dao*, like a long, small long knife, I don't know how do you call it. Sword.

Q. Sword, yeah.

A. They come with that sword, because they wrap their sword by the scarf. They wrap the sword in that, and soaking wet. But that guy also got killed right when the Vietnamese come over. They kill that guy also, the killer. They kill him, it's horribly, but...

Q. The Vietnamese killed him?

A. No. The Cambodian. It's a very, very bad way. I heard they say they cut him from finger to finger.

Q. Other people killed the killer. They got revenge.

A. Yeah, the people, yes. The people kill him. I don't know. Every time I talk about it, I feel like I am there, but to talk about *Pol Pot* regime even take me months. I

cannot finish it, because the action is everyday worse and worse and worse and worse.

RM: What, now, what was their attitude towards marriage? I mean did you get any sense of...there's a lot of stories about how they would force people to marry each other and things like that...

SP: Yes. For a while, I think before the time that we got the rice, mostly on that time they did try to put people together to get married. What they combine is just a rich compared with...rich lady would get married with a poor educated and stupid people. They would do a...it's like a joke to them. You had no choice, O.K. You not talking about honey moon. It's just for you to have sex with them. It's their own people. It's not like a--it's not with *Pol Pot.* This is talking about...the slave. We are like a slave. They force the slave to marry to each other, but it's not compatible.

Q. Different classes.

A. Different class. And it's just their fun to see that. And they force them to have sex. Sometime they have children. Sometime they don't, but luckily on that time not many pregnancy at all. Is that where you live have many pregnancy?

ST. For the new people no one got pregnant. Only for the old people, yes.

A. That's what I'm saying, because they got enough food to eat.

Q. And after that, how come you were saying the woman, how come you weren't forced into a marriage?

A. One thing that I tell you is very fortunate for myself after I broke my tooth. It seem to be nobody interested in me, and I always make some kind of weird attitude. I never walk straight. Nobody know my story, because after the people who know my story very well got kill, whole family, nobody know much about my story. Nobody know my background much. So I mostly act like a stupid.

Q. So you act stupid, you didn't look attractive, so no one wanted to marry you?

A. No. Because who wanted to marry such a stupid, and sloppy, and...I never button my shirt in the same way. It always come--you make, instead of make attractive, make ugly as possible, O.K.? You still clean inside, but I never--my skirt always touch, you know, touch all over, and I always wear such a stupid hat. It's such a ugly and nasty attitude. Not nasty to other, but just like a weird attitude, or maybe my attitude would be weird too at that time because I lost so many.

A. Maybe you were weird.) Maybe I'm were weird.

Q. Do you know, like for instance, say, did you what the communists did with the people who had, who were mentally ill, I mean, you know in other words, say that you had a mental illness, what would happen to you?

A. They knew, they knew--Oh, if somebody really had mental...

Q. Right, right.)...

A. They going to kill them.

Q. Kill them? So let's kill all the mentally ill people, is that right? That's what I thought.

A. Yeah. Yeah. Because special with somebody who...who try to commit suicide, O.K. In our society right now, you would try to help them, to convince them to appreciate with your, you know, with their life. For them, no, "You want to kill yourself, let me help you," and kill them.

Q. And say you were a mad person, I mean a person that lost her mind...(voices overlap)

A. No. I'm different. I am mad, but in a different way. I do what they told, but I just kind of...I'm mad, but I also weird looking.

Q. Weird looking. Yes, because it seem to be like a...weird looking is just to stay away from men who would interested on me. You know, instead of show them the beauty, I show them how ugly I am, and tell them how stupid I am.

Q. Now there's a Cambodian saying, maybe this would fit--you know the Cambodian saying, "Always take the curved road" ? How do you say that in Cambodian? Always take the curved road.

ST. Cambodian saying: " *Phlov Viech Com Bors Bang, Phov Natrorng Com Daer Horng*" means "Take the curve road; Don't take the straight road"

Q. You know what that means?

A. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. You're taking the curved road you think?

A. Yeah, yes. Right. I did, because that's my father before he die. He told me, he said like, "One thing that you--time will show--if you want to show your beauty, save until the time will come. Don't show it now, because around you it's nobody that would appreciate what you have. They would be jealous." And he's right, because after my father die, my hair--I never stay the same shape. my hair always come different shape. Even the way I walk, it's so different in the way I never have such a sweet voice, I never say "thank you" to anything. It just--I never smile. My face, it seem to be like, you know like crazy look.

Q. What does that mean to you, you know, "take the curved road"? As a philosophy what do you think that means when someone says, a Cambodian says, "take the curved road"?

A. I think it's right. To me, it figured out if you take the curve road, it depends some kind of people that you have to take it too, because to *Pol Pot* regime, you have to. If I'm straight, I tell them who I am, and what I am, I would long gone. They would kill you long time ago. But the curve road would take me to tell them how -- you know, to show them how stupid I am, how selfish I am, and they save me until now. It does, the curve road it really save my life.

Q. Just as an aside, I mean as a question, do you think that now that you've left that situation, maybe you think at times you--do you see yourself taking the curve road now, in your life now in America? Do you think you learned something about the curved road?

A. I did learn, but one thing is...after *Pol Pot* regime I miss a lot of trust, because I figured out it's hard to trust everybody, anybody. Should I become to be an American, I just figured out myself, I do still take the curve road in a way, it's not all the time. But I still do, because where I work right now I deal with a lot of woman. if I'll be straight to them, I don't know, they probably treat me different. So sometime I have to act like...It's not what I want to be, but I have to be. You know what I'm saying? So the curve road is--no matter where I'm going I still use that.

Q. So you still use that saying. In a way you hide yourself.

A. Yes, I hide myself, because deep down in my soul. like sometime, even sometime I'm not going to tell how I feel to other people. I told them the truth what I feel, but sometime I have to hide my feeling. I cannot tell them exactly like, you know, it's just a conversation between you and me and her lately, you know just talking about being lonely, I'm not going to tell everybody about that, because very personal. But in the meantime...sometime I have to tell them I'm very proud of myself, I love to be alone, such and such. It's not true, but this is the curve road too.

Q. Now just again, one last question on the curved road, I mean do you-- in these interviews so far, I mean have you been taking the curved road or you've been mostly on the straight road?

A. I very straight, because the thing is...

Q. Why is that, you think?

A. I don't know. This is the thing, like is something that I tell you exactly what I been through. It's very honest. I don't have any curve road in this story at all, because the action and everything I say--I'm in that action again that I been through in *Pol Pot* regime, again. This is in action. It's like...it's everything--it's like in here it just show off...you know, it's just not the attitude. I can almost feel the smile, the anger, the happy. Everything in there, it's just there. I can see how so many people going crazy after the war. Before I don't understand it, now I do, because people are different. Sometime you catch up are you sensitive. Your sense is different--I don't know how to say like...You know some people who has children or family die...some people who got suffer or very sad the same day they have loss? But some people would take them a little bit longer. I don't know what kind of person I am, because I see myself to be like, for a moment after they lost I feel numb. And lately I feel so busy about everything, about my life, about to create my career and everything. And the more I think about, right now it start to come to me maybe I'm so lonesome, I don't know, but I miss what I have.

Q. So you're having a deeper feeling now than a few years ago...

A. Yes. Than before, because I always so busy about how to survive. I also very busy how to make my life better, and now seem to be from that step you keep go up another step higher and higher. It's now come to the point like, I almost go back to what I lost before.

Q. Well maybe you're stronger now, you can go back to it. maybe you're in a position now where you can go back, because you're stronger.

A. You think so?

Q. What do you think? Say maybe two years ago you couldn't go back because it would've hurt you too much.

A. I think you right, but the thing is right now, I figured out...if I can talk to god, and he give me a chance, *Sophan*, you can't go back to exactly that happiness life, like I have my children back, and I have my parent back. Even he let me live for only a week and die, I would trade that. I would like that. It's just the thing that I

figured I would trade everything I have right now just to have what I have before. Even it's not lost, but to have it again. Or maybe it's the human being want it, because we are human we always want something that we don't have. But the other hand, I'm just some kind of...to me I feel like it's just some kind of a mother want it. From time to time, I miss so much being a mother. From time to time, every time I miss my children, I' m thinking about the past, and I' m also thinking about what I just told you, about the *Pol Pot* regime and everything. Even you know, I know it's not my fault, but I still blaming myself. Why can't I just save only one children to have with me? Why can't I only have this? Why can't I only have that? I mean most mother would probably feel like she have one son to do something for him. And I figured out myself, why don't god just save me one to have my life look forward to something? You follow me? So the thing is, come back to that point, sometime I feel like I' m going backward, because what I come for so far right now instead of appreciate--I do appreciate what I have right now, but I also feel greatly for the past.

Q. Sure. Well what about--I mean is it possible for you to...bring a child into your life now do you think? I mean, have you ever thought of like adopting a baby or...

A. I think about that, but I figured out...I love to be a mother, but I don't want to get pregnant again, because it's not fair to bring another child just to...just to add my dream, because I know that my age is very--it takes a lot of chances, take a lot of risk to carry another child. And I don't want to bring up a...baby that it's not really, how do you call it, healthy or...you know it's the baby who come with very weak, or you know, like some kind of disease. I also want to have, to adopted one of the children, but I love to be a mother, but one thing, it's not fair if I have right now, I probably leave the children home alone because I'm a busy working woman. But I figured out if my life style down a little bit, and I have more money, and I can be like everybody go to work one job and come home, I'd love to be a mother. Have somebody to look after, have somebody to talk to, you know, have somebody to hold. It's so nice to be a mother, and I miss that relationship. One thing it's bother me the most when all the woman talking about oh, my children do this to them and do that to them, sometime they blame about--I figured out, "At least you have something to complain about." You know? And they look at me and they say, "What do you mean?" I say like, "I already have what you have, and they just gone. You don't know how lucky you are. I don't have that anymore." And yes, I would love to have that in time, when I got enough, but I'm not going to adopt the children unless I can find a very good home and a very good life for them; because if I ready to adopt somebody I willing to be a good mother for them, because I know I'm a very good mother. And I know all the mother in the world would have the same feeling.

Q. True. But then I think you're a young woman, I mean, don't you think...

A. I'm thirty-nine right now.

Q. Sure. A young woman, I mean don't you think this is a possibility for you?

A. Well one thing if you' re talking about pregnant, getting pregnant or you' are talking about adopted?

Q. Anything.

A. It's different. Here I'm talking I have to carry the pregnancy, I have to find the good man to be a good father. It too fair for to bring another life in this world to have a decent parent for them to look after to be the copy. I think it's too late for me right now, because with woman who try to carry the pregnancy after forty years old, which is, like I said, take a lot of risk, and it's not easy to find a man, you know. And the other thing is, if I want to adopt it, even if I have the money right now, yes, I would love to...to go to work one job, and come home spend time with the children on a weekend, take your children to the mall to shop. Yeah. Would be a very good relationship. I would love to...but I don't think I can do that now, because my life style is already...

Q. What I'm saying is that don't you think you're young? Don't you think in the next few years you can work this out?

A. The next few years I might adopt it, if I can find a decent man, yeah. I would love to adopt.

Q. Yeah. So it's not hopeless.

A. No. Not at all, because if I had the children, I'm very sure I probably give them enough love, and I'm sure I have enough everything that I can have.

Q. Well one of the things around the memories, I mean, do you ever think that a memory can--the memory of the past can help you build a future though?

A. Yes.

Q. I mean, I'm saying a memory is not always sad.

A. No.

Q. See, I mean maybe the memory of your children can help guide you in your new life. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? Does that make sense?

A. The memory of the children, that's separate, O.K.? But the memory of...I live everyday right now through the memory, I live with the memory. When I feel sad, when I feel depressed...the happiness memory when I feel alone, the memory that I used to have a very good time with my husband, my husband that treat me like a...the short time that he treat me like a lady, the short time I'm very happy, that memory would help me. When I'm alone, the memory that I have very big family, I used to be in that position. I used to be a very happy little girl in a very, very nice family. I used to be a very, very good woman in a very nice and strong husband, and I used to be a very, very good mother, and two beautiful children. It's a lot of memory. I live with the memory right now, day by day. I figured out it's something I don't have, I take the memory come with me. I used to be in that position. I lost, so what? Life has to go on. Sometime it's hard. Sometime I take a shower and I scream. I say, "Why me?" But I also say, "Why not you?"

Q. But do you also think, I mean, what I see with a lot of Cambodian women who have lost their husbands too, is that the, sometimes the memory becomes such an ideal that, you , know, it becomes so wonderful in the mind of a woman that they can never feel they can achieve something equal again. You understand what I'm trying to say? You know, it's like that was paradise before, so no matter what man I meet now, it's always going to be second rate. Do you ever have that feeling?

A. It does. Before I...like, I think this year seems to be completely new year for me, that I've change a lot. I surprise myself that I change a lot. The memory that she have, it's nobody can compare with her husband, I been through to that position. The memory that I say I used to be somebody wife, I don't need somebody else anymore, because I used to have such a very nice living life style before, I used to have that. That's not anymore, not this year. After I got the house, after I got what I wanted. One thing that you are right, because I'm thirty-nine right now, I become forty soon. I want to have what I used to have before. Start from now I'm not anxious to looking for a man, I'm not looking. But it's good to have one that can create my life to be somebody that I want to be, because I know no matter how strong and how hard I try to be, I never be the way I used to be.

Q. Maybe the new life with the man maybe different than the past life, but it may still make you happy somehow. It may not, in other words, it may be different. In other words, you may have the memories of the past that are important and...

A. It does help. The thing is I could use the memory as the experience, because no matter what nationality, no matter the past or the future we are only human being. For me, I would use the memory for the experience, but I'm not willing to compare from here to the past because past already gone. I don't want to go back to the past. It's horrible. But I would love to be the past to be a mother, because I been there it's not long enough.

Q. I understand exactly what you're saying.

A. That's not all Cambodian woman. I had the same kind of attitude because most Cambodian woman who have mostly the same kind she does, because I have many--two friends of mine right now, who always thinking about stay home and take care of children--take care of grandchildren when they getting old. They never thinking about getting married or anything at all, but they are different like--they are not in my shoe, because they have somebody to give it, O.K., and I don't.

Q. So maybe--I see. So if you had a child you...

A. It--I might be like her.)...

Q. may say, "Well I don't need a husband."

A. Yeah. But right now...One day Dr. Mollica when you have somebody to do something for. When you come home, you have somebody to think about. Where is my son doing, where he's going? You have somebody to think about. You have somebody in you mind, you heart all the time. You do something for that person. She do everything for her husband, her son and her parents. What do I do for? First of all I thought if I have my house, I probably getting so busy, but doesn't have any fun anymore. life is so dull. And I figure out, I have to do something for somebody, to adopt the children. Most children, they need both parents to me.

Q. So you have a lot of love. What you're saying is that you have a lot of love you want to share with someone?

A. Yes.

Q. Well that's great. I mean that's a...someone who finds you is going to be very lucky. They're going to have so much love...

A. Thank you....

Q. They're not going to know what to do with it. (SP chuckles) It'll be like a river. I mean, you know, washed over with a sea of love. What do you think?

A. Laughing

Q. It'd be unbelievable, don't you think?

A. I don't know, Dr. Mollica, but from what I love so much, I figured out it just...

Q. Sure if that...Well, that you're not better, see. You're saying that you have a lot of love to give. It's very beautiful.

A. I do. I do. I do.

Q. It's wonderful, don't you think? After all you've been through, that you still have so much love in you.

A. I still--I have very soft spot with children. Like every time I see the children about...you know all kind of children age, and I figured out...I always picture if mine alive, probably like this and like that, but I also feel so sorrow after, also, you know. But you right. I would be a terrific mother. I would be a wonderful wife. But it's not about the cooking, O.K., because some of man would expect woman to be cook. It's the life style that I start to give up, I don't know since when, and right now seem to be like...According to my culture, you are somebody's wife you have to prepare, home to be clean for them, prepare, serve everything for him. I don't have that talent, but i have so much love, and I have...

Q. Well you're looking--what you're saying is you're looking for a relationship, you're not looking for a marriage. (SP: Well.) In other words, you're not looking just to cook, clean and take care of a man. (SP: No.) You're looking for a relationship with a man,...(SP: Somebody that I can share...) a friendship.

A. Yes, that I can share. It's not just because sex. It's just something that you--the shoulder that you can cry on, that would be companion.

Q. So you learned...

A. In a hard way. (RM: You learned it the hard way, yeah.) Well, even right now, *Pol Pot* regime is the very horrible thing to do, but right now become, I become a very different person. I used to be very quiet and mostly, you know, up into myself, but right now...the way I work right now, I always compare: I been through *Pol Pot*, a hundred time worse than that, I can do this. This is, compared to *Pol Pot* regime, nothing. You know what I'm saying? I hate *Pol Pot*, but I use them as the step to push myself up from one to another, and keep pushing and pushing right now. And it's not just myself. I just tell the girl who live with me. She said like, "Oh, I don't like this job, such and such." You say, "Compare to *Pol Pot* regime," you say, "you right." Nothing ever worse than that. It worse than hell in *Pol Pot* regime, and after you been through that already, you can do anything. That's why I'm saying take one day at a time. Use that stupid thing to be the experience, and tell, "I get that before, and I passed that. Now this is only small thing." I put eighty hours a week. I put sixty hours a week. So what? Compared to *Pol Pot* regime, this is a vacation! And compared to American you are crazy, you work so hard. And I say, "Yeah, but compared to *Pol Pot* this is

vacation." You do two thing in one time. You go to work, you make money. *Pol Pot* regime, you go to work, you couldn't find anything to eat, and you might get killed someday. You never know what day you woke up and see the soldier over there, and say they found the story of you, now you have to go. And you die. I see that kind of impression on the people look, but over here you are very nice place to stay and--I'm not talking about home. I'm talking about place, it doesn't matter where, but you have enough thing to eat. Long as you keep your finger moving, you make a life better. You want everything--I told my brother, my sister, and I told my friend, and I told myself, "In this country you always got what you want, but you have to work hard for it. Work very hard for it." This is the second year that I been take my vacation. I never take my vacation. I work from one job to another. I take my vacation from my full time job to work on my part-time job. And I take my vacation from my part-time job, go to (?)find under the table pay for my other job. I know from what you been through in this country, you figured out workaholic is crazy, but to me...excuse me...(break in tape)

Q. Well you were talking about working hard, not taking your vacation and...

A. Yeah. And I remember one day it's just so--one year it's so crazy that I...the year that I bought my second car, I had no credit. You buy everything by cash, you had no credit at all. You cannot borrow anybody money. Nobody going to cosign for me. I have been here a month--god know. Two or three year, I don't know much of the people. And talking about the cars, about sixty-five or seventy thousand --a seven thousand, or sixty-five hundred dollar, something like that. So i take my vacation from a--two week vacation from my full time job, and go to work to my part-time job. And I got some money over there, and I take the vacation from my part-time job, go to work under the table pay. Take me about two or three month, I got my car. Pay cash. And even though I still don't believe plastic, I still don't believe credit card, because I figured that I don't want to waste my money on the interest and all kind of thing like that. Until I bought this, I know I was wrong. If I only had the credit, it would help me. But still, I still have very good credit. Make a story short, most Asian also are very hard worker, they always compare the present to the *Pol Pot* regime. If you compare like that, make the present job look nothing, because you been work before like a slave. And you didn't got half of what you have right now. Did I make the story too long?

Q. No. Very good. Now around the whole--just a quickly, we don't have to spend a lot more time on the communists, but how...in terms of their philosophy of life, what do you think it was? Do you really understand what...

A. *Pol Pot* regime?

Q. Yeah. What was their philosophy do you think? What did they believe in, those people, do you think?

A. I don't...even to now, I still don't know what they want. Tell you the truth, I don't know what they want. One thing I know is a lot of anger, and a lot of jealousy, and a lot of killing, but I don't know what they want.

Q. So you don't know what--were they religious people, did they have a religion...

A. They're not religion at all. (RM: They had no religion.) They destroy all the temple, right? And they destroy everything that you believe of. To me it...I don't know what to tell you the truth, even now.

Q. And why do you think that Cambodian people would kill Cambodian people? I mean, see, I'm trying to understand what was their vision of the world, what kind of world did they want to create in Cambodia.

A. They want to create what they want to improve. This is talking about their stupid idea, O.K.? They want to start from below zero to the up by itself, by *Pol Pot* regime, not by the past, not by--because before *Pol Pot* took over Cambodia, Cambodia was, you say, about seven or eight level already. This one, they want to destroy a whole thing and start from zero and up. If from zero start to be up about level seven or eight or nine, this is communist regime, not...I don't know how you call it. It's not like a...they do believe we are took over by a U.S. We do believe--they call us like a U.S. slave, or you know what I'm saying? They use that word to--they call us by that name.

Q. And do you think in the new society, in the new world they were creating that all these people they were starving were going to eventually--see what I can't understand is were they really trying to convert you...say you woke up one day, and you went to the communists and said, "Yes. I really love communism. I want to be a communist, and help make a new society." Would you still have to work like a slave, and still feel like an animal?

A. You have to work very hard to be a communist...

Q. So you couldn't become a communist ever?

A. You can't.

Q. So once you were the new people, you could never be a communist, right?

A. No. When you still want the happiness in you mind, you still want the family union, you want to be, you want to...you like to dress up nice, you like to eat good food, you never come to become a communist. You cannot become to be a communist. Is that right?

Q. So in other words, so they were really, in these camps you were in, they really were then not trying to make you into communists, I mean they were basically camps to kill people.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think in a few years, if this hadn't gone on five or six more years, that most of those people would have died?

A. Would gone? Yeah. (RM: They would all be dead.) Because, look at this. If they try to train people to be communists, why don't they save the children? They are very innocent. That's easy to train. Why don't they save them? Why they kill them all too? They want to start, they want to create everything from the beginning up by itself. In other words, they want to kill all everybody and let the other generation will born, and will create to be all communists. Work more like the robot, like the, you know, have no brain, nothing to think about.

Q. So basically the people like yourself were eventually all going to be killed. I mean this was their goal...

A. Oh yeah. Because...Remember I tell you, like the big canal we been dig?

Q. The big canals, yes.

A. This is, it's just--I don't know it's the rumor or the truth, they say like--and they also have the big ceremony day for everybody. After the Vietnamese took over, I heard the rumor they say, this is that we all heard, they saying, they say that they going to have big ceremony, and they going to have a bomb to kill those people. And the canal that we been dig, it's just a pit that they going to...(RM: To bury the people in.) Yeah. And it seem like a lot of sense, because the burial, the canal, it doesn't make any sense to put one in the jungle, O.K. And they been hid or hiding a lot of food, a lot of...we've been do a lot of dry food, save for a lot of thing, that we have no idea what they doing.

Q. And the other thing that strikes me is what do the Khmer Rouge do, I mean if they were killing most of the people in the country, destroying the country, how then did they think they were going to maintain their power? On what base, I mean...

A. What do they do, like they figured out they don't need many people to create their country. (RM: They don't need many people. Yeah.) They need just their own small group. And they have enough food to eat.

Q. Yeah, that's right. But how are they going to prevent the Vietnamese from taking over, the Thai, or whatever, I mean...

A. They don't have that kind of brain to think about it.

Q. They didn't think about the bigger picture.

A. No, they don't, because what they can see, it's not just something that their leaders say, "O.K. you want to be a good communist regime? Do this. Do that." They never have a brain to think about that.

Q. So they had no foreign policy or any of that thing?

A. And they don't know the outside world. They never see television. They never see car. They don't know the outside world.

Q. And the main way they controlled the people was how? I mean you've already went over this many, many times, but I mean, the main way...(SP: Controlled people?) Yeah. They kept all of these people like yourself, all the educated people, all the people, they were able to control them through the terror, through the...

A. Yeah. The thing is because we always have the soldier who have gun, that you don't know they have enough...you don't know they have enough gun or not, but you see they carry gun. And the place you live, it's just kind of, you don't know where you are. And if you escape from that, you probably no food to eat, or you probably got killed, because so many soldier all over the place. Everywhere you walk you have soldier, you also have spies. They have a lot of thing like us here, but they just do in a stupid way and a nasty way.

Q. So, in a way, there were really no communist farmers. I mean, basically all the work was done by the slaves basically. And everyone else was regulated as slaves, is that right?

A. Yeah. Yes, you right.

Q. I mean, there was really not towns of communist farming.

A. No. No, it's just a town like nobody been--it's just a young girl that's nobody pay attention. It just seems to be a place that you cannot live with a lot of tick, a lot of deer tick, a lot of all kind of thing. You would got killed with a lot of thing without the communist regime. Is that right? You got--so many people got...You talking about the lime, about the deer tick in this country. We've been through that already. Everybody have that. I still have the deer tick right in my thigh.

And it just...even you not got killed by them, you probably got killed by--got lost in the jungle, or you got killed by all kind of diseases they have over there, because it just some kind of...(speaks to Svang in Khmer. ST: Malaria.) Malaria all fever, and like a (Speaks to Svang in Khmer)...cholera, essentially cholera yeah.

Q. Now. Finally, what was the role of the communist women? I mean, did women play a part in this, or all these killers and leadership roles...

A. Ha woman too. They--one thing that, they train to, according to where I live, they train woman, it seem to be like...most woman deal a lot with be a leader of the small group or leader of the big group. The woman do the talk. You know, like men would be the leader out of ten woman, and ten woman would be the leader of the group. But they are ten woman to take care of the group, to, you know, to keep their eye on us. The men would have the, you know, take care of the outside on the border, you know, killing...

Q. Were the Khmer Rouge women also fanatics? I mean would they kill people and beat people, and things like that?

A. I never see that, but I heard that, yeah. I never see, but I can see the way they see--like the way she's slapping, or she hurt other people, I see, but I never see they kill other. But I heard some they did.

Q. And the last thing is the problem of rape. I mean, were most of the Cambodian women, the new people, the women who were the new people, did you have to constantly fear that you were going to be raped? I mean, was that a big problem with, I mean...

A. During *Pol Pot* regime?

Q. Yeah.

A. I never afraid that I might got raped from my own people, but from the *Khmer Rouge*, yeah, because sometime in a small room that they try many times, but thanks god it's always something try to help me out with that because I almost get raped many times from the people who give me food to eat. All the time they figured out, you know, like...it's about time they want to play around with you, but--with me, but also have something to...and I don't know.

Q. Because in Cambodian society, I mean, before the Khmer Rouge, I mean...was rape a problem in Cambodian society? (SP: No.) Because people are...

Q. No, we never heard about raping. Oh, we heard about different kind. This is we talking about a very, very poor educated group that they not talk--they fall in love with that woman, O.K.? And they go to ask the parent, and the parent won't let the daughter to be his wife. He will go kidnap her, and marry her. O.K.? But it's not raping, and after that, because some kind of...not some kind, most of the culture figured out it's...the guy would sleep with you, one, he would be your own husband, no matter he like him or not. He already saw you, you body, so you have no choice. You have to married him. You have to live with him no matter...

A. So why do you think the Khmer Rouge...what was the reason for rape? I mean why do you think...

Q. Just for fun.

Q. Was it a political tool, or is it for fun, or were they trying to devalue the women, to rape and you know, try to destroy their personality?

A. To me it's just the--one thing is just the anger. You know, they figured out they always compare themselves like, if you saw me before you wouldn't talk to me, until now you under my power; that's why you talk to me, you be nice to me. And I didn't even...you know. And sometime they still call you lady, they still call you miss, something like that, and in a nasty way, like jealousy or angry.

Q. So they would rape women, and they'd often kill the women after raping them...

A. Yes, sometimes.

## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 7

Q. Now, what we wanted to talk a little bit about...was the question of communist--we wanted to get your ideas about communist values versus traditional Cambodian values. Yeah, because in fact, it's very hard to understand how the communists did what they did to their own people. In other words, it's sort of like an auto genocide. In other words, there were Cambodians killing Cambodians.

A. Brainwash.

Q. What do you mean, "brainwash"?

A. Well, communists--when the regime goes in, they brainwash all stupid people, real uneducated people, and criminal people. This is the way they did: they brainwash those people who completely become to be another sort of human being, that want for the regime idea...live through the memory of the regime rule that you want to be a good communist soldier, you have to do this. And those people, they never got a chance to being...educate themselves, to have--they never have any kind of power. And the regime gives those people, after the brainwashing, give them power. That is just a fake power to those people who believe. They are very strong, they are powerful. They would do whatever the regime's rule said it's wrong, it's right, because they want to stick to the power. I can see people kill their own mother, and kill their own sister, because they really in to the re--you know like somebody soak into the Bible? (RM: Yeah. Sure.) It's like that. It's brainwash.

Q. Well would you say that the Khmer Rouge were Cambodians? Do you see them as Cambodians?

A. They are Cambodian, but they are brainwash.

Q. They were brainwashed Cambodians?

A. Yeah.

Q. And do you think that these people maintained any of the traditional values of the society?

A. Oh, they do love their family. I mean--it more likes husband and wife, but I don't really know about their relationship, how the love life style, but they really care about their children. They care about their wife. If they do something through the law, the rule of the regime says. You know what I'm saying, like the rule said like you are the good soldier, you have to tell your wife to work hard. Don't do this, don't do that.

Q. Well, so if I were Khmer Rouge working for the Khmer, what would make me--what would give me my identity? I mean, what would...if I gave up all my traditional values, I gave up my Buddhism and everything else, what would...

A. What do you have?

Q. Yeah, what would I have?

A. The fake power.

Q. The fake power...to do what? I mean what do you mean by fake power?

A. Because you feel like--I mean like...This is the way I look at, because I cannot put myself in their shoe. The fake power, like you become--I'm very manly, I'm very strong, because I can kill those people. I become to be one of the best one in the regime that I can do a lot of thing that the bible say in the--not, I shouldn't use "bible," you know, but the way they say in the rule become to be the perfect one for the rule for that moment. That's why I call "fake power," because they thought that is the main power, then that's all they know about, they only been trained to be.

Q. Well did they have any real power though? Were they given any real power do you think?

A. They are so stupid; they didn't even know how to read. They didn't even know how to--they learn everything through the meeting, and they didn't even know what's that mean. They use a word, like they said "cuisine." They didn't even know the cuisine is the French word. They use that because they hear that. They never think about where it's came from. When--the first time when we live over there, they say they hate everything came from America, right? But they had to use the spoon. They would change anything for American spoon, U.S. spoon. You know what I'm saying? (RM: Yes.) For the U.S. clothing and everything that exchange for that, very expensive. They would exchange everything for that, but yet, they said they hate U.S. stuff. But they fight for it.

Q. Now how did the--how, you--when you're in these concentration camps did you ever meet any of the leadership, the *Pol Pot* people, the top people?

A. Yeah. The top one, but they most end up dying, because...I live through that--remember what I said to you, like I almost die, got kill many times, that one of the leader been supporting me, and yet they could figure out should rape or should let me go. Soon though, but those people are die, because after group to another group...this is what they do. From one power come on very strong, and the other

one, the new generation come over, is stronger than the old one. And they kill that one, because they want to be stronger. And I shouldn't call generation, I should call time-to-time, and group-by-group. And then it's end up, because Vietnamese come over.

Q. But, do you think, for instance, in the people who were--do you think that the fake power was primarily based on the feeling they had that they could kill people, and that they had power over people's lives, I mean is that what made them feel big?

A. Yeah, because the other way, I don't know you see "20/20" or not, they show a little bit about the emotion face of Khmer Rouge right now. They live in a camp. They are only fourteen years old. They use gun, and their face look like robot, do whatever you say. Read what they believe--hear what they--all they used to hear. They never used to have brain, and that deny me of the face of *Pol Pot* regime through that time. (RM: No emotions.) No emotion. No feeling, and... It's like, like...

Q. Huh?

A. Yeah.

Q. Well they had their own *Ting Mong* (scarecrow) it sounds like. (SP: Yeah.) Because if you disagreed with the regime, what would happen to you?

A. But she more likes a machine killer.

Q. Like a machine killer.

A Because down there it may be talking about *Ting Mong* war. You probably have one *Ting Mong* that is very--that is the victim, which is the people, and the *Ting Mong* killer, which is the *Pol Pot*.

Q. Yes. Because if you disagreed with the regime, what would happen to you?

A. You would die.

Q. They would kill you.

A. That's it. Even you not disagree, you agree whatever you they said, but they feel that they mistrust you, you will end up kill anyway. The way to die is so easy. They compare, and they put me in where it's very, very difficult position to do a farming. And yet they give us a pair of cow, which will do the farming. They care less about human beings, but they care about their cow, because if something happen you die. There are many that survive that can do the farming. But the

cow die, it's very hard because it's hard...You know they compare the human being life. it mean nothing.

Q. How do you think these people got to this point where they use this entire killing as a way of maintaining power? I mean how did that happen you think?

A. To me I figured out from the beginning is jealousy, and anger, and control. The most thing is most people that they was brought up from the Khmer Rouge, is most people who is the criminal escape to live in the big, big jungle. And Pol Pot, they really smart, they train all those people, non-educated. And those people who really, really hate people who live in a town, that are very educated. Hate and jealous, and revenge. Because--the reason I said that, when the minute they know you are well educated, they start to follow you. And that revenge, because those people who live in a poor, poor life style, they work very, very hard, but with stupid brain, that they love to be--they work for somebody else, not for themselves. They work today, just for today. Tomorrow is another day to come. You know what I'm saying? They make enough just for today. Who care about tomorrow? And those is the people who are mostly uneducated, that they come to be the slave of the real educated people; because they never use their brain, they never push themselves. This is the way I look at it. To those people, by the time they got power from the communists, from *Pol Pot*, that give them--"O.K. You want to be what you are, what you want. Here's the power, but you have to kill those." According to push yourself, to be up, according to create yourself to be somebody else, kill somebody around you. Make it look lower, then you will become taller. You know what I'm saying? Instead of push themselves, why don't bother to push yourself so much. Kill somebody around you. And then revenge is because the opportunity that the hatred, because people who are criminal, they never admit that they do something wrong. It's only the mistake. Why can't they accept it? But instead of being...realize what they did is wrong, they escape to live in that society that support them to say what you do is right, nothing wrong with you. They are the people who live in the town, who are very educated, who are wrong, because they was very rich, they were very educated. That's why they got what they want. And the people who--everybody, you always craving and want for something you don't have, which is make those people who live on the border, or in the jungle figured out rich people, or people who live in the city, is the enemy. But yet, they are their own people, but they was brought up in the different life style and different society...the way I look at.

Q. Now do you remember any of the, you know, the traditional songs or the sayings of these *Pol Pot* people, I mean do you remember...

A. The song is mostly telling you to work very hard. The song to tell you like...to make you against U.S., like hate, what they call the first enemy. The song would make you believe you work very hard from the beginning in your hand. They

don't believe in machine. They don't believe in electronic and they don't believe anything. They don't believe religion, they don't believe in nothing. You own to your own soul, and your own work, but yet to the regime that support you, make you become to be human. So you have to do everything, betray everything for that rule to be a good communist regime. Work very hard, so you woke up in the morning, four o'clock in the morning. You work very hard. When you fall to sleep, you dreaming about how much that you do for your family...no romantic. And I figured out, its just people become to be the slave of life that you don't have to enjoy what you have. To be a good person you have to work very hard, care less about everything around, and be strict to the rule. You be all set. No love song, nothing.

Q. Now maybe the next time--do you remember any of the words to these songs? You don't have to say it now, but...

A. Yeah, the other...It's same old song like dance...

Q. Can you write them down for us the next time again?

A. Yes. I will try.

Q. If you can remember, I mean, I'd especially like some with your story...Now what about, this is another thing you can work on a little if you have the time, I know you're busy, is your own traditional family sayings. I mean was there anything your mother said or your family said that, either sayings or stories that you feel were very important to you, you know, helping you get through that experience, and now do you go back and say, "Gee my mother told me this story in school, I learned this story...Do you understand what I'm saying?

A. No.

Q. In other words, are there any traditional sayings, Cambodian sayings or any traditional stories that you feel very strongly about, that meant a lot to you?

A. Oh yes. That's a...To said like one word I think all Cambodians would say that, is no matter how rich you are, don't forget your background, no matter how happy you are, don't forget the sad time. Does that answer the question?

Q. Yeah. Do you want to say it in Cambodian, so we can have it in? I mean, how is it said?

A. Like when you are rich, don't forget when you poor, right?

Q. How would you say it in Cambodian? Say it in Cambodian and we'll translate it.

A. Now I forget how to say it in Cambodian. (laughs...speaks in Khmer) mean when you are rich, don't forget when you being poor. (speaks in Khmer) it's mean like, take your time very slowly, eventually you will get what you want. Do you know what I'm saying? Step by step.

Q. Are there any things, any sayings, or anything your mother shared with you, or any of the priests or the monks, or any that you feel mean a lot to you that if you think about it you say, you know, these are very important words for me, you know?

A. To me it's just a word that my mother says. She always gives me the strength that I'm very smart, brilliant. Well she's just a natural between mother, between the relationship and me and my mother. I don't think you--I don't know she have it with other children or not, but with me, yes. She always admires my beauty, my smart, I mean being smart, intelligent. That's the strength and it helps me, yes. That's help me a lot, because everything I do right now, I figured out, "Gee, if mom knew about this, she would be proud." That's the work, because I turn around if somebody said, "Boy, she's very attractive," I say, "Mom you're right." But I have to use that to make it better. You know what I'm saying?

Q. That's right. Yes, I understand.

A. So, but that is the--I don't think all mother would have that with children, but just between the special relationship with me and my mother. And she always said like, you work with--you do something, you do with confidence. Feel confident yourself first. According to get close, you know, make com--feel more comfortable to yourself first, before you feel more confident to other around you.

Q. Yeah. Did she give you any other advice like that? I mean that you liked to think about?

A. I like to think about because--but my mother, she's a best, best teacher. It's a lot of way that I live right now is through what she said to me with my childhood. She always figured I'm...according to my mother said-- I mean, to what she said to my mind, she make me feel I'm so smart, so brilliant, and so strong. And what I do is just to improve that, to make it come true. I cannot remember the word exactly, but the meaning of that, it's mean like that, because--and she figured out, here you are in this world, you got the beauty--yeah, you got the look, you got the brain, you got the mind, use it, and live with it.

Q. So that helps. That gives you a lot of strength. It seems like that.

A. Yeah. It does. It does help a lot, I mean even through this time right now I figured out if she were alive, she would be very proud of me, even sometime I'm not proud of myself.

Q. And what about the Buddhists, I mean, do you remember anything from your training in Buddhism, or is it your mother's words that were most helpful to you?

A. The Buddhism, it's not much, because I'm not a hundred percent very religion, because I think I brought up to be--my father, he used to be a monk. And I was brought up, because at that--I go to the temple, because I want to please my parent. You know what I'm saying? And because I got so used to that kind of culture, this kind of religion, I didn't see any way around better, because become to be like, it's part of your life, and you have to do it. But I do believe one word that they said: "When you good enough to the other, if one person cannot help you, other people will help you." You know what I'm saying? Like if you do something good for other people, other group. If one group of people tries to hurt you, another group came up from nowhere would support you, because the way you try to help other.

Q. So if you help others, when you're in need, someone will help you.

A. Yes. I mean, if this is come back to my position, like, I feel more confident right now, because I'm--need it. (RM: Yes.) I got a chance to help some of Cambodian who been through the loss, not much as I can...

Q. And they may not even know you. You just help them, and they don't even...

A. Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's just not just Cambodian, even some American who been complain about how much they been suffer for the children how much they been through, and how terrible life they have, and put myself in their shoe and compare it. It does help. I mean, maybe it helps in front of me. Maybe it's not help in the future, but at least in that moment I see its help. I see the bright eye open. I see, "Thanks a lot. The minute I go home, I be hold my children, I say, 'Thanks god.'"

Q. Do you feel that, I mean, do you feel that your mother's teachings that have more--like, for instance, do you remember anything your father said, or you feel that it was mostly your mother?

A. I'm very close to my mother. My father, he's a wise idea about lot of thing, but I'm too close, I'm very close to my mother.

Q. And what about your husband, did he say anything to you that helped you?

A. Actually my husband--it's kind of odd relationship, because after I got married, it's Cambodians seem to be, two years after that to be end up, like have a side war, in the countryside. So he's not really with me all the time. We see each other from time to time, but it's happened to be husband and wife. I have children, and I fall in love with him after I have my children. We don't have--we...he's very nice, but I don't think I learn much from him, except love him and care about him. But the experience I been through, through my mother.

Q. Yeah. He wasn't one of your teachers.

A. No. No. And beside, I'm mostly stronger than him, because I'm more independent. One way that I see my mother position, I see she serve my father so much, and she still got abuse sometime, not in a physical, physically but mentally. You know, through the love life. And I keep compare myself to my mother, and I push myself. You know, my mother, she always said like..." This is what I said. This is my life. Don't do what I do! But this is what I think that you should do." You know what I'm saying? And Cambodian word, they said like that too, they said like, "Take a picture of life, but don't take the picture attitude, the personality. Take the advice, and use it, you think that advice would help you, use it. But don't follow the attitude, the personality." You know what I'm saying? (RM: Yes, I do.) That's what my mother said, you know..."If I was know better, I wouldn't married your father, but yet, this is the advice. You still so young, use this as the experience, and push yourself. Don't be end up in my shoe."

Q. Yes. I see what you're saying.

A. So after all through experience life of loss and from everything, my mother is always my best teacher, my best friend, and my best therapist. (RM: Right.) And I don't think anybody in my family who have that kind of luck, because my sister, she always been, not abuse, but she always feel like she's the victim, because my mother pay more attention to me. And my two brothers and my one other sister, she's very late to know what going on. But thanks god for that, that I'm very, very close to her. I never, never tired to remember about that. And everything I do, I lose or I gain anything, money wise, or broken heart, any kind of thing, I keep picture myself, if mom only knew about this. Imagine if she's alive, she would be proud, she would feel sorry, she would--you know like, the first thing I think about that for the thing I do with my life style. Like, I got involved with somebody, I found out he's a alcoholic, and fall in love with somebody who is so much younger than me, then I realize this is American life style right now that I deal with between my culture. I cannot be a hundred percent Cambodian life--culture, but yet, here in America, and I'm a human being, I have to make my life keep on going. So I have to minimize these two culture combine to be one. Not to be too right, not to be too wrong, but the first thing I do, and I think, "Imagine if my mom were alive. Would she do this? Would she blame me? Would she

forgive me for that?" So even she's die, and she's gone, but her spirit still give me the strength to compare, to hold on to--not to give up, to try again and again. But yet, at the same time, when I come back myself, being sit down and settle down for everything, then I start to figure out I still miss love. I still miss being a mother. It's very different life style that I have to fight--not I have to, I live with right now. You know what I'm saying? Like, in my soul, it just not one baby, I have three baby. I keep taking me back and forth, back and forth. I don't know when it's going to end. I don't know, but this is the...I wouldn't call confusing life. I figured out it's the best therapy for me that keep my mind busy.

Q. Does your mother, I think you have mentioned this before, does--and we only have a few more questions, I think we--does your mother ever come to you in your dreams, or do you ever...

A. All the time.

Q. Can you share a dream with us?

A. I think the first time when I had the relationship with my boyfriend that I broke up about...it's almost a year ago. No, it's eight or nine months ago. The first time that I met him, it seem to be like, I saw--like, the way I met him...My dreams never mix up between my mother and the present life, live in America. That's the first time I dream about my mother who live in the same house, who leave her hand wide open for my boyfriend. And when I woke up, I related that dream to--I thought, to me, to my mom it's a big welcome. She said, you know, more like she said "Do it. Here you are in this country, you cannot strict to our culture. Do it." Or maybe what I want to hear, or maybe what I want to do, it aim me to what I want to do, but yet I do it. But no matter every time I do it, I still feel like in the dream when you dream about the mango. This is the way I dream. I'm superstitious about that, dream about mangoes. You probably do something, like you feel sympathy. You feel sorry. And every time that I see my mother, I always met her under the mango tree. Play with her, or talk with her, or she give me mango food, which is something my mind couldn't figure out why I saw her, and why the mango keep follow. But yet, three or four month after, I found out he's a alcoholic. Now the mango comes true. I am very sorry, but yet through the culture I just cannot...I cannot deny I'm not Cambodian, I am. Through the relationship, from time to time, I been have like a, you know, like a relationship become very serious. Like a sex relationship become more, and then I just cannot let it go, and just to dump that and go on to another relationship, I try to work it out. That's what I did. I tried to ... I tried to AA to help this person maybe become to be the man I really want to be with. But yet, from time to time, it goes by, but you know. Who should I blame? I blame to the dream. I fight in the dream. I talk to her in the dream. I cannot remember a real dream, but sometime I dream I tell her what going on. And sometime, like the other day I went to AA,

for the first meeting for the, you know, Allen and about that. And I come home, I'm very, very exhausted and angry the same time that I--why don't I know better. Why can't I give my time more before I sleep with this guy, but yet I let my loneliness and my...yes, the loneliness. You know, ruin the thing that I been taking care, been...do so good for so long. So, and I fall to sleep, and that in the dream I just, all I can see is just I lie down in--she always lie down, we always sit on the floor. She sit down with her leg, both leg relax. I lie down on her lap, and we talk. But mostly it's just a smile, and that talks, tell her what going on. But I never got any answer, but it's just the expression of the look like she's sorry to hear that. You know what I'm saying? I never got a tone of voice that she tells me what to do, never. But it's just the expression of the look and the act, and I have to figure it out. I fall to sleep. I saw I lie down in her, and through that time I'm in the building, in the group of LNN (?) or AA people that share they experience, and she sit over there with me. And it seem to be after I tell them what I just told a group, you know, during the day like, I just had a relationship with this guy, and the next thing I know he's--after I found out he's an alcoholic, it's too late. I have been in love. So now I try to get him out of that, you know, that thing, that alcoholic, but yet I become victim. All I see is just the reaction face and a sorrow look to me without any question. Yet, even through the dream, I have to figure it out myself. You know what I'm saying? Is that get to any? You get any conclusion? (RM: Yeah, sure.) Because it just...but I always dream about...when I'm sick, when I'm happy I dream about her all the time. It's like I have a different life, two different lives. If I feel so lonesome, I cannot--sometime I cry to sleep, and i saw her in my dream. Sometime I feel lonely I depressed to sleep, you know, until I fall to sleep, I saw my children. But it just a different life, that saw the present life. That's the best therapist, but yet it also give me some trouble too, because sometime I'm dreaming about how happy I was in the dream. I woke up. Here I am in America. I was in the dream, and I want to go back to the dream again. I can't, because this is reality. That is just a dream. It's good and bad. It's good because I have the best therapy that here in my mind when I relax. It's bad because they are not reality; it's just a fake. Is that answer your question?

Q. Sure. Now what about the other side of this, do you ever have any nightmares? Did you ever have nightmares?

A. Yes, to *Pol Pot* regime?

Q. While you were in the *Pol Pot* regime or after it?

A. In *Pol Pot* regime not many nightmare. *Pol Pot* regime you dream about food, you dream about your freedom. Over here yes nightmare. Sometime I dream about I been escape to--so many times you escape to another country, you have nothing. Sometime I dream like a mix between Cambodia and America, and I have to escape from there. Sometime I woke up frightened, because the terrible

nightmare, and I have to call the--I have to talk with somebody. Because the horrible dream, like to see my--like the other day I saw my brother. He looks so handsome. He comes in, open the door, and ask me for something to eat, and yet I couldn't give it to him; because I said, "No. I cannot give it to you." But I said, "Wait a minute. I thought you die. But why you come back?" And here I am dressed up in here. We present right now, it's make with the past. But it's very weird, and it's waked me up. It makes me so shaky to see my brother. I am very close to my brother, my older brother. To see that face and the look, and the look, you know those, the anger look, the angry and anger at the same time the--I cannot define that, because it's a face that you look like you have--you cannot see anything, but...like black out. You know what I'm saying? To see that fear, and I woke up, and I knew it's a dream. It's a bad dream, because I'm very frightened. So I end up call my sister and talk about it. Sometime would help, and sometime wouldn't help, because...yet she would have the same kind of feeling, we been through the same, except she doesn't have any--she doesn't lost any husband. She doesn't--she's not married yet. What does she have, it half what I have lost. But yet the life style is also very different, because she's more like a tomboy. I'm more like the mommy little girl all the time. But I have the nightmare yeah all the time. Not all the time, every night, but I said like a...I cannot tell. Depend by the life style. Sometime when I think if I talk to you like this, tonight I might be dream--nightmare about that. it just related to the present life. You know what I'm saying, to the...through the life style that I have. So I think they're all--not I think, I'm very sure Cambodians have the nightmare all the time.

Q. And the last question we have, any spirits or ghosts? I mean, do you have--have you ever had spirit possession, or been involved with any spirits or any ghosts? You understand what I'm saying? I mean, sometimes Cambodians will see ghosts or talk to spirits and...

A. I pray, but I...I used to believe ghosts, but not anymore. If i believe in ghost I couldn't live in here by myself. But yet, if I see the scary movie, I saw in my dream it frighten me. You know what I mean? You know, like the Dracula, anything. So, I don't think it's bother me much, unless I see a killing movie, you know...

Q. But what about the spirits of the people have died? I mean, do you think--do you feel their spirits are at rest? I mean, have you come to terms with that, or do you have any belief--I mean, some Cambodians do, some don't. I mean, you know, some feel that they're...

A. To me it's just gone.

Q. Just gone, yeah. (SP: Yeah.) So you don't have a sort of a supernatural feeling...

A. No. No, because...but yet, I still do something just to make it--not to make believe. Like during the Cambodian ceremony I keep praying to my parent--it's like the way I get used to it, but in my mind, they are gone. (RM: Yes, yes. I see.) They cannot feel it.

Q. Yes, I understand. Well, do you want to say anything else before we stop for a day? We're coming to the end. It's a quarter to four. We're almost done.

A. I think this is it, because it seem to be so long too for me.

Q. You know. We may be able to finish one more time. You know what I mean?

A. Really? Are we go that fast?

Q. We have one--well, we have one.

## INTERVIEW 9 - PART 8

Q. January 13, 1990, interviewing "S" on January thirteenth, nineteen ninety. Today what Svang and I would like to talk to you about is, you know, after listening to the experiences you've been through, not just the experience of *Pol Pot*, but even your, you know, childhood experiences, how do you feel that these experiences are affecting you now? I mean, in other words, you went through all this, you know, trauma, and now you're in America, and how do you feel that it's still affecting you at this point in your life?

A. It...Like lost and found. I lost so much. It's a part of my life that I been building, natural like I grow with it. It lost, but yet in my country I don't have much of the freedom, of the woman freedom, like in this country. I have some certain room, rule that I can move, because from what I do, what I said, I have to make believe--not make believe, I have to be sure that somebody want to knows me as like the good Cambodian woman, respect me by my personality, the way I talk, the way I show my anger, the way...it's a lot of thing that brought up to who I am and what I am, because I don't have much of the freedom to scream, and would yell, and. You know what I'm saying? It's the way I brought up so different, very strict. I mean...

Q. Well let's talk about this as a woman. I mean, how would you say you've grown as a woman coming to this country? In what eras, I mean how would you be different...how are you different now...(SP: ...from Cambodia you mean?) Yeah, you would have been, if you had stayed in Cambodia?

A. The different because I do a lot of new thing that I afraid--I'm not afraid to try. In Cambodia I afraid to try, because I afraid I might be a failure. But after *Pol Pot* regime, it bad because I lost, but I use that as like experience to push me, to be a fighter for what I want.

Q. Can you give us some examples?

A. Like example like before, I never realize I can go to apply the job that I have no idea what I'm doing. Before I apply to do something, I have to be sure that I know what I'm doing, but this is I have no idea what I'm doing. I go out of there. I just figured out I have to learn from the beginning, but yet anything that they will teach me, I will learn from that, take from day one. Is that making sense to you? Like in Cambodia, I probably afraid to try, because I afraid I might be fail. And it's trapped to the same condition like I become, because I have what I want. I have enough money to support my living style. I have everything. But come to this country I have nothing. I push myself, but yet I learn a lot of new thing. And I'm a fighter, because I never quit very easily. I push it. Like when you go to--when I go to school, I had no idea what the teacher talking about, but yet I still

trying day by day, even one day I pick only one English word home. I still trying to do very hard. To work in the factory, I had no idea about gluing. No idea about setting, about anything. And put yourself in my shoe. I speak broken English. I do mostly like sign language. You know, like the way you talk. If I was in my Cambodia, I wouldn't try that hard, because I always have something to lean on. But come to this country, I had nothing to lean on--no, I shouldn't say that. I could depend on welfare, but one day I just wake up, I don't want to be on welfare. I have to be somebody. Cambodian life, it's a life that past. It's always a part of my life, but yet I have to make a new life to be somebody, to be a better life. That's why I end up going to work full time, go to school part-time, and turn out to be go to school full time, go work two part time jobs. And I always end up in school, and work, work, and school, school, and work that push me this far. But yet still not enough, because the more I know, the more I don't know. The more I--you know what I'm saying? The more that I knew about English, the more that I need to know more; and the more I want to create my life to be something else that I want to be. Yet now I come to this far. If I look back, it's not that bad. It's not the way I really want it. I still want more education. I still want to be more like...aggressive, to be--to be somebody.

Q. And to be more aggressive is something you learned from your par...

A. Yes, from my parent. (RM: From your parents?) From my parents! From--yes, because my father and my mother, she was brought up in a very, very poor, poor family. My father, he doesn't have much education, but yet he's a hard worker. My mother, she had no education at all. She cannot read or write her own language--I mean her own letter. Because their parent didn't send her to school they been live on, they decide to push us to school; but yet through the society, Cambodian doesn't count much on a female education. Long as you know how to read, to write--I mean go back to the old American society, it the same. You know how to count. You know just enough to take make you, you know, do--take care your own bill, you be all set. And that is part of the way I brought up. But come here to see a lot opportunity that woman can grab, can do. That keeps it like equal to the man--you know, man can do everything, so does woman. I cannot say a hundred percent, but I figured out sixty percent of Cambodian--of female who do most like men do. I'm not talking about fiscal or, you know...but I learn, I learn from that. I figured out in this country you always got what you want, but you have to work very, very hard for it. The education would help you a lot. To use your, I mean, sometime they say like a..."Don't work hard. Work smart." I cannot do that. You don't have to work hard, work smart if you have well educated, and you know the people you talk to, and the people you can deal with. For me I have to work hard, because I don't have much experience, or much education in this country; so I work hard. Eventually, maybe in the future that I get more education, and then I probably work smart too. But...I take one day at a time.

Q. Now, would you...I mean, do you think that the experience, the *Pol Pot* experience has damaged you in some way? I mean, do you feel you have any handicaps or any problems from that experience? (SP: In my mind?) Yeah, in any way, I mean physically, mentally, you know...how ever. I mean, how do you...

A. It is. It create--it bill me, I'm become very weak if I'm thinking about my loss, my children. Through the loss like being a woman that lost husband, being a woman that lost parent, being a mother that lost children. The affecting me the most is being a mother that lost children. Sometime I could explode my anger, because I'm very--I have a lot of jealousy, and envious in my mind to see a beautiful family with nice children. Especially with about my children age they die, like four, five years old. I missed the opportunity to watch your children grow up that. I miss being a mother very, very much. Sometime doing the two jobs even couldn't help me to make myself busy enough to run away from that. I have to face the truth that I still anger about--very angry about it. It does make me feel like--sometime make me feel like a manic, getting so angry, like blaming god. I mean, what have I done, what have I done wrong? Why me? There is no answer, but it's a deep pain, sharp inside my heart; that I don't think it will go away. Days and nights, I see the child abuse. It's killed me the most, because something that I'm really trying very hard to taking care, but yet I have no power to control it. It is just gone. And to see something that people really have it, what I don't have, and they don't care. They care less about it. That is--that's why I come to become a victim of that...of that feeling. Every time I talk about children, I am getting so angry because what I lost. It's O.K.--it's not O.K. for my brother and my sister, or my parent to die; but it's still like I kind of learn how to accept it, because that is there, it's nothing I can do. But to let my children die, I still blaming myself, because I see some people that--some baby that survive through this time, special my--you know, Cambodian children who are my children age. To see they grow up, live in this country that makes me so envious and so angry. And I try, I work through the psychologist, through the counseling, nobody can help me. It's just...the wound is just so deep. Is that answer the question?

Q. Yeah, sure.

A. So that is the part that I--I have to work on it eventually, but I don't think--I don't want to hear, because I live with the memory. Sometime I cannot wait to come home and getting tired to go to sleep, to meet them in my dream. To wake up, even they are disappear, but I figured out they are still a part of my life. Sometime I ask myself, "Why can't I rebuild another family to do it." But yet I cannot be strong enough to face the truth. How about if I brought up another handicap children, how about my children turn out to be drug addict, or any kind of thing, what would I face with that? It's a lot of negative side, but yet, it positive, it

seems lesser than negative, so I decide to let it go. But being a mother broken heart, nobody can help me. Nobody can fix me.

Q. Do you think that that feeling prevented you from, like you say, adopting a child or having a baby, or something, I mean, do you think that there's this... (SP: It would help?) No. Do you think the feelings that you have, like you say, being a mother with a broken heart, has prevented you from having a new family? That's what you were just saying. You feel it's stopped you from having a new family? (SP: Yes.) But why is that? I don't understand that.

A. I figured out if I got a chance to adopt it, even though I still see another children, I still--nobody can replace the loss. Even I adopt another children, like example, I got the money, I adopt two children, it the same age as mine. I keep compare to what I have before. It's just something that I have to work on. It just nobody and nothing can fill the loss. And beside, if I decide to--maybe I being, you know, decide to have another baby by being get pregnant again, maybe the chance to get so closer to the baby, because you can feel the baby kick, you can feel the baby grow inside you, and come out, it's you. But yet, it's a lot of chance because I'm forty years old right now. It's so much chance for the baby to have fifty chances, and I don't want to bring up a handicapped baby. Probably feel sorry to bring another life just to refill my sorry, and yet put another life to this world, become to be victim. Why I'm being victim myself, it's just suffering and why brings another life to be another victim. But even though I still feel like, maybe time will change if I got a little bit more money and to adopt it. But I don't think it can refill my memory for a hundred percent, no. But it's good to have somebody that come home and call you, "*Mommy* do this. *Mommy* does that." But yet, I look into the bright side or the good side, I never thinking about the children who been...you know, being a parent you want your children to be the best. I never thinking about my children grow up to be what I don't want them to be. I never think about that. I think about all good side. You know what I'm saying? Sometime I'm very fortune to compare myself to some of the mother that been suffer with the children, who drop out of school, become pregnant very young. You know, they're about my daughter age. Then I start to feel, "Thanks god I have no children." But yet, even though I still miss. I miss my children terribly, very bad. But the only way that I can face is just nothing I can do. I still blame myself very bad that I couldn't help them to survive through starvation. Sometime I feel guilty...to do a lot of thing that my children ask for the last minute, and I couldn't help them. You know, like something to eat and.there's nothing I can do. But you always have something to blame and something to enjoy. But they are also is part of your life, part of the life that I been through. It's part of my life. It just seems to be very unlucky, because I cannot enjoy everything so much for so long. It always has something to destroy it, and maybe this is--it means to be for me, for myself.

Q. Do you think that the problem of the past memories is a stronger source of upset than, for instance, having--like, do you feel the experience weakened your body in some way or made you physically not as strong--I mean do you feel it's mostly the problem of this memory problem of the past...

A. I'm very fortunate for that memory of the past, just the experience of the past, it ruined my memory, but physically I'm very strong and healthy...(RM: Physically, right.)...Because through that point I was brought up in a middle class family that I always have the maid to do thing for me, I don't have to cook if I don't want to. I have somebody who do my cloth, you know, go shopping with me. And come to the point--one thing about *Pol Pot* that when I go over there, they would train me from below zero. And I worked very, very hard to survive. One thing that I admire come to this country, no matter how hard I work, I keep compare the present to the past that push me away. That is what point of view that--I'm not saying to *Pol Pot*, but I think to myself that we survive, and face to the truth between the past and the present right now; because somehow, when I am the only Cambodian woman that work in the group of American all different class, sometime they treat me like dirt, sometime they treat me like prince. They never treat me evenly, like equal. For me I focus to my work, and I keep compare that to Pol Pot. I been through hell, and I survived. I won't let this bother me.

Q. Yes. Right. This is small compared to *Pol Pot*...

A. Yes. So I always use to compare between now and then, now and then. That's the way it push me farther and farther. And beside...one day that I find out and.after the *Pol Pot* regime, I figured out I can do anything, because I wouldn't let myself become to be maniac like some people, they want me to be like one. I won't allow myself to do something that I don't want to. I'm more control of myself. I get to know myself more. Even I live in Cambodia, I don't thing I got the chance to get to know myself this much. Or maybe because the loss, maybe for being independent for so long, I got to know myself very well. Not quite very well, but I get to know myself more than I live in Cambodia.

Q. And you think there's power in that? I mean, if you know yourself do you think that makes you a more powerful person or a stronger or a healthier, I don't know what word you'd use for it...

A. I think it's make me more like a...stronger...(RM: A stronger person.)...Not healthier, because I would-- healthy it's just--I was brought up in a very healthy little kid, but mentally I had my time. I cannot be happy all the time, but yet, about two or three year I start to let my anger instead of--Cambodian you always hiding, no matter you just cry, wipe you tear off, dry your tear, and smile. I cannot do that anymore. One thing that I like about American is just let it go. I let it

come. I mean I deal with the action right there. But...gee, I become more independent, stronger and real.

Q. Now, as you look back on--we're going to go a little bit back to past now--just as you look back at the *Po Pot* experience, what did you think helped you survive that experience? I mean what were the central things that you did or happened that allowed you to survive that whole thing?

A. Remember what I told you after the loss? I become numb. In that point, now thanks god that I have been numb for that year. And come to the point when you go through the bottom. You have no way to go. You get stuck, but yet you keep moving. That's the only way you go. This is the way I am. I had no choice. If I not try to push myself, it's the only way I would die, but I take my last chances. Even I die at least I try to fight with the die, with the death. If I die, so what I try so much, but I cannot. But luckily that beside numbness, when I be bad to myself, become myself again, being a human again, I have some kind of negative attitude, like, if I die, so what? There is nothing for me, no meaning. Life has no meaning for me anymore. I don't no with anybody, but for me, being a woman that lost so much...life, it means nothing. If I die, so what? But yet, if I die, I want to die happy. I try my best; that's why I fight through that. To live in Thailand, I see so many people start to work very hard to make, you know, to sell black market, to exchange the gold, all kind of thing. And they got a chance to get rich. They got a lot of thing. You know what I'm saying, to exchange, to get rich. My family is different. When we come over there, I just tell my family to be--not to get rich, just to be alive and be healthy, and keep on going, work toward your dream that my mother tell me one day I want to see you live in America, out from this hell country, I mean this, such a terrible life. And we did it. We care less about being pretty, being look good, being rich, but we care enough about we got enough food to eat, and yet, we thinking about the future. So thanks god that we have that kind of...that kind of fear for whole family. And come here...for that fear if I craving about the money and to make money during that time, I wouldn't be here; because there a lot of opportunity over there that give you a chance to make money, and I was brought up in a family that really did a lot of business. Like my mother, it's a lot of opportunity to do that, but yet I just stop thinking about that. I think about the long-term career and freedom.

Q. Now did you ever, as part of you r survival, did you ever hear the Cambodian term *Ting Mong*, the *Ting Mong* (SP: *Ting Mong*.) Do you know what that means?

A. *Ting Mong*, I see. Remember the life I tell you I become numbness? That is the life you become *Ting Mong*. You become so stupid. No, *Ting Mong* is the life that I live in *Pol Pot*. They tell you what to do and you do what they say. You don't use your brain. And after that kind of *Ting Mong* life...*Ting Mong* is just something like a--it's just a stuff that have no feeling, no brain and nothing. That's

the way we all survive through after through that, and then we become a robot. This is what I say. First of all they use you--you do whatever they said, and after they tell you what to do, you come home, you lie down in your bed; yet you see the killing, you hear the crying, you don't care. That's what I call robot like...because you figured out what to do more like the computer robot. You do what they say, but you have no feeling. And yet the time for you to being yourself...you cannot be yourself. You become nothing. Now look back, I thank to the life, if I have my life sensitive like I feel right now, I don't know what I'm end up to be--suicidal or...I don't know. It's not just me. Many people who die by suicide...there are so many kind of die, by starvation, killing, suicidal, broken heart, but from what my experience is, the numbness, it really the best therapy for me on that time.

Q. Did you ever--can you remember when you, for the first time after that experience, you began to be sensitive again? I mean do you have an experience where all of the sudden you said, "You know, this numbness is going away"? You know, it's sort of like when someone who's been in the dark all of the sudden gets to see a little light, and they become excited? Do you remember the first time you began to feel yourself give up some of that numbness and become a...

A. It comes eventually very slow. (RM: It came slowly.) Very, very slow. First of all, after the starvation I start to eat. You know, like you care so much about what you have for eat. You care less about your beauty, and how big, how fat you are. And by the time you become healthy, and you start to thinking about...start to come back to, you know, try to clean yourself the way you want to be, try to put up to nice and neat. And after I got that stuff, then I start to think, look in the mirror, and I tried to, you know, I change my hairstyle. Not to be more style like here, but at least to cut to make it look neat, try to appreciate with myself little bit more and more. And it start to search into me when I escape Cambodia and I live in a border of a Cambodian for a year, and I start to realize I am alive now. And I don't have to worry about starvation anymore. Then I start to eat, and about three times bigger, four times bigger than what I am right now, because it's mostly swollen. Then, after I got enough food eat, you got enough time to rest, then you woke up, I figured out, "*Sophan*, you become back to your old self again." But yet, I never feel the dream would come true. I always have small, small dream that I step--every small step I make it. First of all, I dream about I wish I had enough food to eat, until that my wish come true, then I figured out I wish I would escape here to live in the Thailand border 007. And my wish comes true. To live in 007 you live with the fear about raping, about bombing, about all kind of thing, and you say like disease, and all kind...and I wish I could live in *Khao I Dang*. Luckily, I don't have big dream. The dream I have, it seems to be small--not small step to me then, its very big step, but it's not impossible. It's possible. So the dream comes true. I live in *Khao I Dang*. Then I got enough food to eat. Then I start to thinking I wish I can work some place else. I got enough food to eat; yet I

had time to thinking about my beauty. Then I come to become a cook in a hospital that I got enough food for myself, plus for my brother and my sister. And some left over give me a chance to exchange, to buy some more clothes. Then I become to back to my old self again, little by little, eventually, but very, very slow. I never--if ten years ago somebody said to me, "*Sophan*, ten years from now you will own your home, you have two nice job, and, you know, dress what I want right now." I probably said they are stupid, they're so crazy, and it's impossible. But now, even sometime when I drive my car alone, I figured out, wait a minute this cannot be true. This is I? But it is. But luckily that I--I'm not the person who builds so much dream that I cannot afford it. The dream, it comes step by step, and I make it. I dream about to find--you know, thinking about, I wish I can find somebody--the wish is always come true, that can sponsor me to this country. I met my adopted brother that he works at embassy. He works very hard, you know, to sponsor us through here. Come here. The first time I came here, I'm very, very ill, very sick. I choose to live in Philippine for four month. I am very, very ill. I lost all the weight that I used to have. I got about ninety-eight, ninety pound or something. I'm very, very thin. And beside, I become back to face the past, because I see so many people that have many children left over. Some, they lost husband, but they still have children. Some, they have children, but they lost husband, and seem to be something that they can depend on. Yet me, I had nothing to depend on, except two brother and two sister, that I have very bad relationship with my sister, the one that's younger than me, because we was brought up in a different way. I'm a--my mother favored. And she seemed to be like a sister victim, because she needs attention like me too, but yet she didn't get that attention. You know what I'm saying? (RM: Yeah.) And she blames me. From that time through the tough time that I live on, my life become nothing; but yet, I figured out before I die I have to be sure to see my brother and my sister live in America, to what that my mother asked me to do for her last word. And I did it. Come to this country, all the emotion come through. Now I feel like, more like a human being again. Because come here, I faced the reality this is the new country. I speak no English, yet I'm very ill and my two brothers and two sisters move away. I'm all by myself. Then I asked god, "Why don't you let me die then. Why can't you just let me die then, why you let me survive through this?" And now what I face, it face to the bottom. The past and the present, it mixes. To see a modern life, to see a modern country, to see everything that everybody can do, yet I can't. To see that everybody communicates, talk, yet I can't. I don't know what they talking about. I spend my life, live in front of the TV. I fall to sleep in front of the TV. I woke up in front of the TV. It just kind of lucky that one channel that I like the most is Sesame Street. I didn't realize I learn from then, but yet from watching for so much, I start to understand, pick up word from that. And some of the education that I have, you know, like alphabet, I know how to read French, you know, it come back and forth. ; But yet, I still never know what I'm going to with my life. I rather to die. One day when I woke up, I heard somebody who live on the second floor, which is, she was a...compare to my life style in

Cambodia, she's lower class than me, no educated. They talk English. It just something hit my face. I just figured out, "*Sophan*, why you let yourself to this. Look at those people! They cannot even read and write their own letter, and look what they done. They have two beautiful cars--to me it's beautiful, because even used car, but she know how to drive. And she talks with the mailman in English. What have you done to yourself? So what your family left you all alone. My family left me all alone in here. Life has to go on." But Doctor, on that time I'm worse. I cannot even walk straight because I'm very sick. I got up and look around, and I said, "It's have to be something that I have to do with my life. I just cannot let my life die." I'm a fighter before, through *Pol Pot* regime. Why can't I fight now? Fight with the death. My mother always said to me, "*Sophan*, you so beautiful, and you so smart. You will get what you want. Don't let it go with yourself. Make the best of it." The word is--keep ringing, start to hear louder, louder in my mind: "Use what you have. Use your talent." But what is the talent? I cannot speak English. What is talent having anything to do in here, in this country?

Between that time I figured out, "Wow, it easy to say, but it's nobody can do it. It's impossible." I live all by my self. I couldn't even walk. How can I ...eventually push my life--to be my life in this country? Nobody care about me. Then I sat down again, and let my mind go again. Turn on the Sesame Street channel to see the Big Bird, to see--you know, the way they read, to see the alphabet. They teach you how to use, and start to...then I start to block. Everything concentrates to the TV. You wouldn't believe how much that I learned from television. Day by day I concentrate with that; then I start to block about--who care about outside world? Who care? I still have some food to eat. I have enough food compared to *Pol Pot* Regime I have nothing. Compared to people down stair, they didn't even know how to read, and yet they survive. Maybe I can do it. So I focus on the television, until one day, I figured out I have to get out from this house, but how? I don't know how to take a bus. I still have my sponsor, but they cannot help me all the time. So I call him up, I say "I want to go to school, any kind of school to register." And they laugh at me. I barely walk." And he say, "Are you know what you are talking about?" I say, "Yeah. Go to school." But since I ask, they help me anyway even they don't believe in me. But some how in my mind I still here my mother voice who said, "You not stupid. Use your talent. Even I know that the talent is impossible in this country, use what you have to push it. Push yourself out from this mud." And I did.

I live off from...I have to walk between three to four miles to school. But through that time there are several--couple of family who came the same time, they walk to school together, which is help. I go to school. From the beginning I don't know what the teacher talking about, but to see the way they write...they way, you know, sometime the accent remind me of my television show? (RM: Mmhmm.) That makes me more interested. And I go to school day by day, and I think the fresh air did help too. You know, when you come out you see everything--first of all it's very week, second week I getting more interested to go

to school. Then I look forward to. Luckily that I don't have any children, I come home, I do my homework; and yet I go back to my routine again, watch TV. Fall to sleep in front of the TV, wake up in front of the TV, eat in front of the TV, and fall to sleep in front of the TV the same channel.

From that time, from going to school to see other people, to talk about them, then I start to compare. Compare my life to another family. But they always have something to depend on, but yet I don't. But I compare my life to the people who live in the camp. That makes me feel better. Because I figured at least I'm here. So many people who want to get here, they didn't have the chance. From that time, day-by-day I used to comparing life from me to the top, from me to the bottom. Keep switching back and forth to compare, and yet I love to--not love to go to school--I hate to walk, but I look forward to do it, because I knew that's the best choice for me to push out from my darkness life. And I did it. So that time, when I finished my first class...I seemed to be like a--first of all I figured I'm getting so upset because they put me, I am the first Cambodian woman that they put in a high class of all Cambodian men. I am the only female over there, female student. But know, thanks god for that, because it push me--I compare myself to men who are more level than me. You know what I'm saying? I keep pushing, keep compare myself, and forget about my weakness. From that time when we go to--I always deal with mostly men, because after that class I begin another class, yet I'm the only woman in that class again. Until this Program comes in, so many people go to apply it. I still don't know how to fill out the SEDA's form yet. Here I am go to get the form, doesn't know how to fill it out, show to my sponsor, she laugh her head off...because I couldn't even know how to write. And yet I apply for SEDA. And the welfare, it probably two or three month will be end, because I have in a program that you have to be there--when you are single you will be on welfare for eighteen months, something like that. The money is getting so short. I have no choice. I have to live on money, or I will depend on SEDA. Luckily I passed that. I got into SEDA's program. According to my sponsor, she told me, you know, go to work in cable factory, you know, electric company--so any place that they pay you from minimum wage. I don't know what thing just tells myself like, "I'm not going to work in a factory, and I'm not going to." I would like to work in a way that I can dress up the way I want to be. I want to even I make less money, but at least to got the way that I can dress what I want to. I love to dress up. To SEDA program it take secretarial skill. Everybody laugh at me. Talking about--I don't blame them now if I think about then, because I speak very poor English. Who would hire me? But yet, it's just something been telling me, "*Sophan*, you cannot tell until you try it." And I did it. In that class we have, like, three or four Cambodian women. Now they all end up work in a factory. I am the only one who sticks to my skill, come to this far. For experience that I have now, compared to American, it's nothing; but compared to Cambodian, it's mean a lot...because I'm a fighter. And I go to school--after I finished school for...I think almost, the program is about year and a half...I end up work in the factory like everybody. But in my goal, I still looking

for something that I want to do. I work ten hours a week, but I love to work with it, because I figured out eventually some day they going to hire me full time. I work three part time jobs, for I had no money. That's the only way. Plus I still go to school twice a week. Worked three part time jobs until citizen trust me enough. They let me work twenty hour, so I drop one job, and worked twenty hours a week. I had two jobs, no benefit...because the factory, they pay me full time, but there are no benefit. At the bank they won't pay me benefit unless you work full time. From that time I still very happy to do it, because I knew now I found my step. I figured out I'm going to stick with citizen, because to me, I don't have to deal with the factory any longer. I work very, very hard...

A. ...Help everything, but I'm a quick learner, and I don't mind--one thing that I'm very fortune of I'm not shy, I'm not afraid to ask. And I learn from the mistake. I learn from people telling me, you know...take me six or seven months Citizen give me forty hour job. I quit the other job, and I go to part time school. Full time job, plus I got benefit. I see my life start to go on a shape right now, but yet I still not got enough. I still want more. I still want--I start to dream about new car, any kind of car that I can get. So go part time school, full time job, looking for to be interpreter. Visiting Nurse Association is looking for Cambodian interpreter. Then my English is not quite enough, but compared to Cambodian people who been here for five year, they didn't speak half as much I'm learning for two year. Then I decide (phone rings, tape breaks)...Then I start to have two jobs one full time job, one part time job and part time school. I dreaming about small car--no first of all I dreaming about used car. I want to have car that's easy to travel. I got a used car, but the car gave me so much problem...when I got enough money I dreaming about bran new car, I don't care what kind of car I have, as long as it's new. Through that time I talked to my supervisor at the bank, he gives me a chance to work over time. And I start to talk with my other supervisor at Visiting Nurse Association. They give me thirty hours job. For that time, give me the opportunity to make more money, but I have to drop school because I have no time to do over time. I work between seventy to eighty hours a week with both jobs. Take me about a year, I got money to buy bran new car. It's going to be happy, I am happy from the beginning, and yet I say, "That's not enough." I still want more. I want to go back to school again, because I don't work like this. I want to be something else. I see somebody do permission operator, I want to be like that. And I start to train myself properly, ask them to practice to train myself to be permission operator. It gives me a chance to make more money, and be to deal with Visiting Association for being interpreter I learn a lot from nurse. The nurse learns, we learn from each other. I start to enjoy to being in this country. I start to accept it, because I figured out now I got my foot on the ground. Eventually I will keep working, because, the dream that I think of before is impossible, but it comes true. But I have to work for it. By the time I got new car, I got enough money, yet I go back to my old self again. Very stressed, fight with the fear, living with the memory again. I start to talk to the social worker--I

mean the counselor. Seemed to be I couldn't go anywhere. And I start to go back to school. It couldn't help. Then I figured out, I have to do something to run away from the past. And one day I figured out, this is what I want, but it's still not enough. I don't know what I missed, but I never allow myself to let the problem come out. Nobody know how much I been through, 'cause I always hide in here. Till one day I just decide to tell the supervisor, Visiting Nurse Association supervisor what I feel, because I feel like life has no meaning. I work very hard to get what I want, but yet I'm not appreciating with it. I don't know why. It must be something wrong. And she sends me to psychologist. That guy talks to me, and said like, "It's something you have to learn how to live with it, not to forget it. But you have to get to know yourself first." I never got to know myself. But through that year it seems to be very tough year for me, because I had nobody to lean on. I had nobody that I can trust to talk to except people at work--they don't want to hear your problem. And I'm go to talk to the counselor, to the psychologist, and what they do is just listening to what you said, but yet they have no advice, or nothing to tell me. I mean I keep blowing my story to tell them, but I got no answer back. What would I do? They said, "What do you want to do?" One day I fall to sleep, and I figured out it's hard to be something that would do that, would take it away. I don't want to live with it, but I want to forget about that. Then I found the point that I went to.... somebody mentioned to me about...compassionate friendship. When I walked through that group I feel so different, because I don't know anybody. And I figured out, should I share my experience with this group that is look so stranger to me. But I sit down and listen to everybody share their pain for what they lost. It just soaked into my mind that I'm not alone. Never mind compared to Cambodia. Even compared to this country too. There are losses everywhere. But I cannot deny it. I have to force to live with it. To the way I get up and talk to them--first of all I feel so...I like to--not to perform to feel so uncomfortable to talk to them about what my past... But by the time that I talk about my children, I show all the anger. I blow all the anger out, that I didn't really know that people around me become so quiet to listen what I been through. I didn't know what I been through. It's just a so pain I never let it go. I would show a little bit to somebody that I little bit trust, but I hide him or her back. It's not really--I have no time to explore whole thing. After I talk to them, you know sometime when you tell them what you been through, but yet you learn from what you hear in yourself. You hear yourself talk. And I sat down and figured that's right. That psychologist is right. I cannot run away. I have to learn how to live it. But how can I learn how to live with the fear that I come home, I miss being a mother, I miss my children so much. How can I be like that? So day-by-day I go to work, I start to separate in my mind, "*Sophan*, the past, O.K., you are the mother who lost children. But here you are the interpreter. You have to work toward it, to push your life." Thanks gods to that job that give me strength to compare myself to people who are weaker than me. And I start to go back to my old self again, to comparing life. That I see what people--how weakness they are. I'm not blaming them, but give me a chance to compare

myself. I said like, "Gee, *Sophan*, you not doing bad. Look at this. She lost her children, but yet she still have her husband and her other children, but she still become more like vegetable. You are not so bad when you feel like that. Use your experience to help that people." I think to give myself more appreciation, appreciate, when I decide to use my experience to help other to be needed. I found myself again. Because for being interpreter, I'm more like a counselor too, to see some woman who try to kill herself because she suffers about her loss? And here I am, sit down, compare her life to my life, compare what she have to what I don't have, compare how she is to what I am. During that time, I can see that woman take it and use it, because always compare myself, tell her to put herself in my shoe. But every kind of lost shoe that she have, I been there. If she complains about "I lost my parent. I cannot survive without them." I said, "I been there. I can do it, so can you."? But no, I lost my husband, but I still have my children." I say, "I been there, but I have nobody to lean on. I can do it." From the time that I keep compare back and forth, help other people, but mostly help me too because I become needed. And it give me a chance to figured out, "Maybe this what you want to be *Sophan*. Interpreter. Be more like a counselor." But I still need English, because to take American--two nurses to explain to each other for five minute, take me almost half hour what you just said to the nurse. You follow me. Even I had enough experience, but yet language never enough. So I decide to quit Citizen, become full time job at Visiting Nurse Association, and go back to school again. From that time I appreciate and become needed, and I start to respect myself more by going to school to get a little bit more education for myself, learn from other, and appreciate to be needed. All this answers your question? (RM: Yes, sure. Very interesting.) And even now, I still do it everyday.

Q. Do you think the split, though, when you say, "How do you live with the mother who has loss the child and at the same time be an interpreter," do you think that by developing your work side and your interpreter side, you know your skills and your life, and that split becomes easier to be the mother who lost the child, or is it possible that you could be working and going to school and having a better life etc., but the mother who lost the child stays still very depressed, very sad, in other words that that part isn't cured or isn't stopped? How do you see the relationship between the two over time?

A. Can you ask the question again?

Q. In other words, if you have two sides to your personality, as you develop the work side, you know, your life in America, and you feel stronger and stronger, how does that influence the dark side, the side that the mother without the child, the mother who's sad about losing her child, in other words, does it get easier to live with that reality or is that reality stays unchanged? I mean have you seen that get easier to live with?

A. It's not change anything at all.

Q. So in other words, that part of your life has been unchanged?

A. Part of being a mother that lost children? (RM: Yes.) Never change. I even work on it, but it's never change, because I still very...every time I see the baby and the children, I can feel my heart pounding. That's what I miss, that's what I love.

Q. Let me give you an example: Say that five years from now the work side of your life, you know, you have more skills, you're better educated, your job is going better, you feel you're doing well financially, you may have a relationship, whatever, do you think that that makes it easier for you to live with...

A. About being a mother that lost children? (RM: Yes.) I cannot tell, I don't know, because from time to time, sometime when I when I had the relationship with somebody that really...really talking about he want to be a father, he, you know, I would be a good mother again--I don't want to do that. Or maybe it will change--I don't know, because through that time right now, compared to nine years ago I really much different from what I were and what I am now; but the feeling that mother who really miss children is still the same. Is that answer the question?

Q. Yeah, but it would seem to me that nine years ago. You were spending most of your time thinking about that and being depressed and watching television, but you don't seem that depressed to me right now. So the feeling may not be changed, and you may still have the same feelings about that, it strikes me that through your self-improvement and your self-awareness you seem to be much...

A. I feel more comfortable talk about it now, yes, because I accept the way it is. (RM: You accept it.) I accept it. Before I won't accept it I figured out, but now I'm more acceptable, but the sorrow still there.

Q. Well I ask you this because for a lot of our patients, for instance, they have this problem. They spend all there time thinking about the loss, you know, the sadness and maybe what you're saying that one of their therapies, you know, a way to help them live with it, is to help them build the other side of their personality, in other words to make the split like you made. In other words, there was the mother without the children, and then also there's the person who needs to have a job and a career. You know what I mean, that sometime you were able to make a split and do both simultaneously, see.

A. But you right. The correction is...yes, I become stronger and more accepted, but you're right. When I got more--when I come to this far, look back, I miss my children, I still miss, but yet I'm being busy about other thing too.

Q. See, I'm wondering if this is something that might help other Cambodians who haven't come as far as you, that's the question...

A. I did tell them about that. It might be, but it's everybody not work all the same. And for being, help them the most--this is through I do through my people...everybody would believe you, before you tell everybody what to do is they saw you done it first. And you should see...become sexist. They believe in you. You know like you cannot come to the mother who just lost children, and you never have that loss, you say, "Oh, don't worry. You forget that." That person would laugh at you. It's easy for you to say. But if I come to them and say, "Look, I have been through that. I been in your shoe, but look what I do. I make myself busy to do other thing until I forget--not forget, deny what I have for a while, and then your body is getting tired. And you come home, you getting so tired, and you fall to sleep. That's why I becomes to be workaholic. Through that time I always work from one job to another and go to school. I didn't realize what I'm doing.

Q. Yeah, because you see, I mean one of the things you see with a lot of people who are not workaholics, it seems that they have a lot of time on their hands to think about the past. I mean you know, a lot of Cambodians who aren't working, they may be home on welfare, whatever, and they...

A. Yes, watching TV. You have nothing to do. Yeah.

Q. I mean, they seem to have a lot of time where they'll go over the past, over the past and.

A Yeah, that's what I'm saying, because what I--I never will--I become to be workaholic until now. I sit down and figured out I knew why...because I always ambitious to do something, to take my mind off. I didn't realize I...work is the best therapy for me. I didn't know. And now, even through time, through the relationship from time to time, this is the best therapy for me. If I get upset about something, I go to work. The next thing I know, gee, I got almost enough money to buy a house. And I end up buying a house, but yet I work so hard to get what I want. Now I have to work harder to support what I have. So which is good and bad. Good because so many woman, so many people want to do the same. The next things I want to buy the house, not because I dream about it, because next thing I know I been work, and work, and go to school, work, and save money. And I know, "Gee, I got enough money to buy a house, why don't I just do it, start to build my life?" And I did it. But even though, when I had the problem I still volunteered to work. I always make my life busy, and I don't have time to think. That is the best therapy for me, but I don't think it work for everybody. But to me it was succeed so far, so good.

Q. It's very clear what you're saying. Do you think, you know, you've taken us through the *Ting Mong* (SP: *Ting Mong*, Ting *Mong* you've taken us through the *Ting Mong* to the present, and I don't want to put you back again into the *Poll Pot* situation again, but I just want to ask you a couple of clarifications about surviving that situation just briefly. When you were in that situation, did you ever--these are just very simple questions, you know, just so we can see how you respond compared to some of the other women in the interviews--but in that situation did you have a feeling often that it was an unreal situation, like a dream. (SP: Compared to the past now?) No. When you were under *Pol Pot*. I mean when you were living under *Pol Pot*, did it seem like a dream world to you, or you know, was there something unreal, was there an unreal to it? (SP: Yes.) How would you describe it?

A. Right now, if I look back to the past I wouldn't believe what I have been through, but yet, I couldn't believe what human being to another--been through to another human being. I never believe that people can survive--would take that far, because it's impossible for human being, compared to what I lost, how can you put your life together? It's still the dream, but yet, in here I still dreaming about...right now sometime I figured that this is my dream, because that is impossible that I live in the dream; because through *Pol Pot* regime, there is the reality then. Because I become different person, I become lost and now I found, but I dream about the loss.

Q. Did you feel, while you were under *Pol Pot* if you can remember, do you feel--was it a dream? Did it feel like a dream then too?

A. Yes. It always the dream, because you figure that's impossible. It's impossible. And sometime you figured out this is must be the dream. You wish you wake up, you see something you want to see, but yet, it's there.

Q. It's there, yeah. And did you ever have any experiences when you were living in that state where you couldn't remember anything? I think you did mention this, where you're mind just went blank. You couldn't remember anything. You just blanked out on the whole situation. Or were you always aware...

A. That's the way you denied--the way I learned how to deny the fact from the past. The way I figured out I want to close the past, forget about it, start from below zero, from here. Start undoing it, that's why it won't work. It's almost breaking me apart.

Q. So when you were in the *Pol Pot* camp you would deny you're past life before *Pol Pot*? You wouldn't think about it. Is that what you're saying? When you say below zero, what is below zero mean?

A. Like you start to put your life together, like underneath that you wouldn't believe what you impossible do because...after the loss, I start to build my life again. Begin, start from zero, O.K.? (RM: I see. I understand. Yeah.) And so are these too. When I come here it's impossible for me to find a job, impossible for me to get to school. That's why I'm saying below zero.

Q. Now, also when you were in that situation, the *Pol Pot* situation, did you ever experience, like when you were working or eating or in the fields, whatever, that your mind--you felt your body was here, but your mind had gone somewhere else? Were you able to put your mind somewhere else?

A. I mostly put my mind to the past, the memory, the lifestyle in Phnom Penh, because I never pictured my mind to be farther than any place else. Thinking about romantic life with my husband, thinking about... no, that's not true. Thinking about the food you eat, thinking about the nutrition you have, how clean it used to be; then after you thinking about it, and you start to thinking about how the clothes you used to wear when you get back to the romance I have with my husband--seem to be it's not a big issue to the memory, but mostly food comes right to your mind... because on that time it's not because you become like a machine worker, but yet you don't have enough to eat. The first thing that I think of--something good to eat, a big bowl of rice full of steak, a big bowl of rice lie down with the big fish on the side, and a stir fry--all kind of nutrition, food that I used to eat. But I never dream about coming to this country, because impossible. But yet, I'm lucky because my dream is never come up to be impossible dream. It's always naturally changed to my lifestyle to...

Q. And do you think... when you would be thinking about the food and things that helped you get through the day that helped you deal with the suffering?

A. Yeah. Then talking about comparing it...because I compare my life to people around me. They never have what I used to have. Their husband would be rude to them, their lifestyle--they never have enough good food to eat. And I came from the middle group--the high middle class. I got everything I want. My husband treats me like queen. I wear beautiful clothes in my country. It's just the lifestyle I...I do a lot of comparing through time to time.

Q. Now, my last question in this topic here is did you ever have an experience where you felt that you had been divided into two parts, split... (SP: Where?) Under the Communists, in other words, that you would be--your mind would be outside of yourself, looking at yourself. Did you ever have an experience where your mind would leave your body and would be looking at yourself?

A. Remember the day that I told you that I fall to sleep after I dig the canal? (RM: Yeah. Mmhmm.) With the swing out over my shoulder, and I fall to sleep? (RM: Yes. Yeah.) Yes. I saw myself fall to sleep. Looked like a ghost. Like another part of me look at myself say, "Oh my gosh! I wouldn't believe this is me." But then, you're so tired to think about it. But yes, myself look at myself. I mean, to fall to sleep with the swing, and full of dirt in my shoulder, that I fall to sleep with it...yes, I woke up because I saw myself look so awful. And it frightened me so bad that I woke up very early in the morning that made everybody thought I am very ambitious. But yet, that fear, it fighting me. But, it's not all the time. It's just most of the time that I really have deep sleep.

Q. Interviewing "S" on Rhode Island on January twentieth, nineteen ninety, and we're at interview number eight. We're going to be talking about your life in America, so...I mean basically... How should we start, Svang, around her life in America? You know, what comes to mind when you think about your adjustment to living in America? What are the biggest things that you've had to adjust to?

A. Living style, life, and speech--the language is very important. The education is next--no, the language, the money, the education, and to be strong, more patient--to be patient.

Q. Why don't we just take one topic at a time, and then maybe we could just talk about it. When you say language, what do you mean by that?

A. According to make your life easy in this country you have to know how to speak no matter what--any kind of country, you have to know to speak that language according to make your life easy--to communicate, to get your way around, to express yourself, to tell them what you want...explain to them what you want. Is that answer to your question?

Q. Sure. Well, I mean, when you first came here you couldn't speak any English?

A. No. I could say "thank you," "yes," and "no," even I don't know the meaning--the question is. I smile a lot; it's just the expression like...

Q. So how did it feel to be in a country where you couldn't speak the language?

A. Very strange. Feel like in a young girl, that you are in a group of people who are--I feel this small.

Q. You're making this sign that they won't understand, but in other words, you feel like you're one inch tall.

A. Yeah, one inch tall, because every where you go seem to be like--even now sometime I feel about one inch small too, because would take American to

American express themselves about five minute, example, would take me good ten minute or fifteen minute to tell them exactly what I want. If the person who used to deal with Asian had some experience with that would just take it shorter. With some American, they have no idea about Asian. They probably thought Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Japanese all speak the same language, which it sounds impossible. And the accent is a big problem for me right now. I try to go back to school to work on my accent. I still get a little bit--loosen up a little bit more, but yet, I still have a lot of heavy accent. But I knew, no way I am going to get rid of it, because it's always been a part of me, except it's getting lesser, and it's speak more clear English, education...talking about money. I don't want to work very hard. I want to work smart. To be smart you have to have more education. I don't want to work seventy, sixty to seventy hours a week. I want to work like everybody--forty hours a week, or thirty-five hours a week, and make the money as like I make now. But I cannot do it yet, because I don't have the time, and the education for my country--I would be perfectly fine in my country, but not here. I need to go back to school, to go to college, to get more, you know, degree to improve my experiences; and yet to be success I have to go to--you know, to deal with more professional, to keep working toward my experience, but I need the education. You follow me?

Q. Yeah. And how easy is that to get. I mean, not being an American, not speaking the language, I mean how have you gone to school? How easy is it? (SP: I can go to school.) You go to school now?

A. No. Before I got this part-time job I always go to school like two nights a week, sometime I go to school on the weekends...or, if I cannot take it, I have my tutor--you know, like spend about two or three hour with me a week, which is not enough, but at least I still have something, not lately. It's been about six or seven months ago after I got support a whole house. Almost a year, I couldn't get a chance to go to any school yet because the mortgage is very big for me. So I have to work everything to make the money for the mortgage, to support what I earn, and take good care of it, instead of let it go. But someday, it's not for long I will go back to school again.

Q. What are you planning to study? I mean, what's your...

A. I think two things that I want to do. I want to be a...the beginning, like I said to you, I don't have big, big dreams, but I want to be a social worker. That's the main thing. I get a chance to work close to my people, to help them. But the second thing is, if I want to stay away from that, I would want to be a hair dresser, because it's the hobby that I like to see people look different, people...you know. After become very good in hand, and I would be great at it. I just start thinking the other day about--with my friend, talking about in Cambodia they have special barber shop that you give massage after you had a hair cut, and I don't think they

have one in here yet. If I would be, finish my hairdresser class I would have that. I would try to open that, because it's going to be a few one in this country. I don't know if it would be succeed or not, but the thing that I want to do. So that is two choices. If I want to go into the business that is the business that I want to do: be a hairdresser or be a barber with the massage. And if I really want to work for the salary, and to deal with life and death and everything, I would choose to be a social worker. I don't know, if I live long enough, I would come to become psychologist after that. I don't think so.

Q. Why is that?

A. I need a lot of push, and I cannot do by myself. I have to have something to depend on. It's the money why I can't, because it takes so long to finish school, and take so much energy. You know, take so much time; and I don't think right now with this situation, if I decide to let the house go, to sell the house, I can do everything I want. I can go back to school. I can work one job. But I don't think I'm ready for that yet, because this is the biggest thing in my dream that I want to own a house all by myself. I just got this for a year, and I don't want to blow it.

Q. Sure. Well, money, well...when you came to this country, how did you figure out how to earn a living, how to save your money? How does one deal with--what's the difference between your relationship to money in this country and your relationship to money in Cambodia?

A. I always have small dream. I never create a big dream, like when I go to school, I figured out I wish I knew how to speak English. At least I can get a way to communicate with the teacher, with the student. Thanks God for that, I do it faster than most--not many, like seventy-five of the student, I am one of the one that's very lucky to get...easy because, one thing, I'm not very shy. I'm shy, but I'm not afraid to ask. In the whole classroom there are twenty-five male. I am the only female in that room, in that classmate, which is push me more to compare myself to other, to man. I always, I was brought up in a very independent family, so I push myself for that far; and after that school, I always thinking about I don't care what kind of job I have as long as I make some decent money that I can buy a used car, which is--I did it. I work--after I finish school I end up work in a jewelry place. They call it poxy, it's to glue--you know, like a poxy, and beside it's the gluer. I worked three different factories. Like they hire eighteen to twenty hours a week. So according to keep my life going--this, I'm talking about money, to make enough money, I had to work three different jobs. Then I got the money. And the money I saved, I think it's--to me it's easy, because I never brought up in a big vacation. I always work. I don't care about holiday or weekend. I care less about that. Long as I have time to work, I work, because I figured out that is the next step that I do when I get money. I am always working. Always end up working and volunteer when they ask they need people on over time, or on holiday even

they pay me straight. But I figured out I need money. That's the opportunity for me to pick up at this moment and work, you know, to make this money. And it's come to the point like some American getting angry, because you are very ambitious, and the job that I want to do, it's just nobody want to do it. It's a dirty job, but I don't mind. That's the way I build my foundation from know nothing and learn from the job that nobody wanted and used that as the experience. So from that time, by the time they see how hard worker I am, then I start to get the job. They start to give me easier job, make a little bit more money with the raise and with everything; and they give me full-time job, which give me a chance to work over time with time and a half pay, and have some vacation, but I still don't use my vacation for a real vacation. I always work two jobs. I use that vacation to work on another job to make the money.

Q. Now, how did you figure this out, this technique? I mean, did someone tell you, did you talk to other Asian people, or did you just...(SP: No. I just figured out myself.) Well, how did you come up with this idea--how did you develop this philosophy towards work?

A. I think because...Thursday we talking, we had--I should give a little bit credit to *Pol Pot* regime, because over there we had no weekend. We work from the dawn to--sundown to sunset. We had no time to rest. The way I put in here to myself, I figured out I come to this country, I have beautiful place to stay. What I mean beautiful place to stay, where I live it's a two bedroom apartment, very small, eat in the kitchen, and small, small living room, lots of cockroaches, very, very bad neighborhood. But to me, it's a home, because I have enough heat, I have my refrigerator, I have my little color television, I have enough food to eat, and I got a job.

Q. So compared to *Pol Pot* this was good.

A. Heaven.

Q. Heaven, yeah. And do you think--I mean, someone might say to you, "You know, you've been working so hard to support yourself, and you're trying to learn the language, you're trying to go to school, you're trying to make money..." I mean, does it ever affect you in the sense that you feel like, for instance, that you feel emotionally deprived, or you feel...in other words, a lot of Americans might think that you're missing out...(SP: I am a slave to my life.) Yeah! Yeah! You're a slave to your life. Yeah that's right.

A. Even now I still have that, but it's not bothered me.

Q. So you don't feel like a slave to your life?

A. No. I do figure it out one thing; there are two things that is the best therapist for me. One thing, to keep myself busies, to make my mind forget about the past. The next thing I know, I'm a workaholic, but yet I make decent money that makes my life getting easier. But I still have what everybody have. I have nice clothes. I have nice jewelry. I have nice car...except if they work one hour, I work one and a half hour longer than them. It take them two or three months to do thing, it probably take me double the time, six months to do what--eventually I will be there. You follow me? Because I figure out--because the education I have to push myself more. A lot of friend ask me why I should waste my time; let it go, enjoy it. First of all I figured they're right, but how can people enjoy without money? I enjoy getting up in the morning dress up the way want and go to work. And to make that enjoyment go through, I have to work very hard. I left home seven o'clock in the morning, come home twelve o'clock, or one o'clock at nighttime, for to sleep on the couch, for to sleep on the dining table. That's the beginning of the lifestyle that I tried to survive to fight to put my life in the middle class, and yet, to make me to become somebody. I'm not getting to anywhere yet. But I'm so proud, because every cent, every piece, everything I have in this country, I earn it. I work very hard for it, in a very decent way.

Q. Now this may not be a fair time to bring this up, but why, with your fellow Americans who might have more than you, why do you think they don't work as hard sometimes? Or could you sense from them that they didn't have the same ambition?

A. I think the way we brought up, it probably different. Because when you brought up easily, you don't see the struggle. You figured out it's easy. In this country all you do is just open the refrigerator, and feed. I see some American kid about nine or ten years old, they didn't even know how to cook for themselves. In Cambodian or Asian, when they start to know how to cook in the house--seven or eight years old, isn't it? They know how to cook rice. At least they make their own breakfast. Over here it's just so easy, because everything is so modern. You just push your finger a little bit. Even you go to school, you didn't have to use your mind, you use the calculator, you use adding machine. I don't mean they not work hard. They work very hard, but the way I brought up, it's just--it's not all people, all American, and not all Cambodian are like me, but I just seem to be the different one, because I figured out if I want to get what I want, I have to work hard. In a group of people that I work with from the day one I start to work until now, I can see they waste so much time.

Q. They waste a lot of time, yeah?

A. Yeah. Smoking talking. I'm not saying all of them. I just say some of them.

Q. Do you think that, you know--because a lot of times Americans who have been in this country for generations, they sometimes resent the new Asian people because they feel...(SP: They're hard worker.) They're hard worker, right.

A. The thing is--because when I worked in a factory, I remember I had nice, good, good compliments from the boss, like I work very--well, beside Asian are very good with hands. Anything go with hands, forget it. You never beat them. And I do, and come to the point the work almost slow. And they want to drag the work until the end of the week. I didn't know, because when you keep working--this is what I do. I always--when I am working I always keep my mind by the memory. My mind some place else, even my work--keep like, like machine. You mind and your hand go different direction. This is talking about jewelry factory, O.K.? You enjoy by your memory. But you see what you do after you know what to do, you do very fast. And all of the sudden somebody knocking...they say, "Slow down. We need some work to do for tomorrow." Break time everybody run to take a break, but you seem to be like... To me it's very enjoyment to work and to think, because it's the best therapist for me. But not like--don't take me wrong, because I don't know everybody agree. It's different way, but this is the way I am. And some people who just dislike me because one way because I'm not American, the second way is because I care less about the break. I figured out break it's just--you can sit down, you can break and relax on the table. You don't have to run--you know, hitting anybody to take break. I can see the minute they hear the bell, everybody runs through the table. The minute they hear the bell, everybody run to the door to go home. That attitude, I never got into me until I become more American. Like now I figured out I should be more like one of them instead one of the different one. It's not because I become to be not a hard worker. I still be a hard worker, because I figured out every cent I earned I work very hard. I don't owe anybody from it.

Q. And what do you think about the Cambodians--there's a number of Cambodians who have the opposite, who, you know, they say, "Well, (you know) I get the welfare and that's enough and.

A. That is another story that I figured out. It's just some--the way you see from different opportunity, some Cambodian who come the same time I do, they have something to depend on. They depend on welfare, and they have children that--they always can collect welfare. I had nobody to depend on. After eighteen months in GPA, I have no choice. Either I got a job, or I had no money. But the choice for me--if I end up work in a factory the rest of my life, and make minimum wage the rest of my life, that my choice. But my choice I'm not going to be like that. I cannot put myself in that shoe, but the way they feel it's different. I cannot say they wrong, because they have this--there's a good excuse for them because, they been work so hard in *Pol Pot* regime. They almost die. Why they

kill themselves for another life. For not to survival in here again. So this is the point of view that I figured out...everybody is different.

Q. True. Now you mentioned language, money, and education. Now, being strong--what was the--in adjusting to America, what do you mean by being strong?

A. Being strong by believe what you do is right, because I been stepped down for so many times. People look down at me and try to pull me down. It's just under estimate me.

Q. Is this in like Cambodia, refugee camp or the United States?

A. Here. In Cambodia I am one of the upper middle class. I am very clear, I feel very confident in here too, but Cambodia, I can tell. I was brought up in well educated, very polite, and upper middle class I am. To put my life in this country, I have to know how to talk, to act, because I been abused from physical abuse--no, no, mentally abuse. But no matter what I --I shouldn't say that. Its--let I put it this way: because you are different, they always judge you the way you look before they get to know you. And the way I feel because I remember-- (RM: In this country?)--Yes. I remember any job interview that I go to work with, everybody getting kind of panicked to hear we have one Cambodian girl who works over here. And everybody start to get realize Cambodia. She speaks English. The first reaction, "She speaks English? Yes." To work with them from the beginning, with the heavy accent I used to have, with a friendly smile. I always smile. They thank you for a lot of way that even I don't have to, I get so used to say that they probably thought I'm crazy already. I'm just a coo, coo, I'm nut. One thing, I'm always smiling.

Q. Why do they think you're crazy? I don't get it. You seem too happy?

A. Yes. This is what happened the way I go to work at a Royal of America, until that lady ask me, " Why you always smile all the time?" And I didn't know I smile. But I think its just impression of a face. And I said like it's nothing wrong to smile, and she said like "To work in this job you're still happy. What do you want to do five years from now?" That's the big question, and I think about it. She's right.

Q. Well when you say mental cruelty, you mean they--what do you mean by that?

A. Well, when they talk about you they probably thought... When people look down at you, you can feel it.

Q. In what way? How do you feel it?

A. Like what you s... They... It's hard to explain. They use you, they ask you to do lot of thing for them, when they sit down and do nothing. And after you do it--they do, they say like, "Oh, you do this so good." They try to make you feel so good--they treat you like a child, O.K. Like they said like even that they job right now they never treat me the same way they treat American. They either treat me too cruel, or too nice. It's not the way I feel. First of all I thought maybe I feel the way I feel, but I asked a close friend of mine. It's just the way they feel, because they never feel like I would be think like Americans think. They thought the broken English--I probably thinking broken the way I am talking too. Like, If American talks to American in some way, and you know that we're doing, you tell, "Look, I just do this. I know what I'm doing." Another person will take it fine, but to me, if I do that, the other person, even they know they are right--even they know they are wrong, but they take advantage of me, and fight for their own fault to be right. And I used to let it go, because I figured out if this a big operation and I have no way to explain it.

Q. Can you give me an example of that? Like what was your worst situation like that? That you remember.

A. Like at the bank. I'm very ill. I cannot supervise. I want to go home. To another employee you have the right to go home when you feel sick, even you not sick, but when you tell them you are sick how do they know how you feel your body? And you have your sick time, your personal time to use. But yet, my supervisor won't let me go home. He walked me downstairs to the cafeteria until accuse me; I vomit right on the floor. Then he tells me to take a rest in the lady room and waiting for the ride. All American friends would tell me, "He treat you so cruel." But he wouldn't do that to another American human being, but he does that to me.

Q. And why do you think? I mean what's the motive behind that?

A. Because one thing, he thought I don't know any better. Because that's the first job that he know I love to work very much. I'm very worried when they tell me I do something wrong, and I'm very nervous because I afraid they might fire me. And that guy takes advantage of me. (RM: He did take advantage of you.) Yes. And another thing is, to run the machine operator... Take me months to run as fast as people trained for six month. But I still didn't get much credit at all. My supervisor still takes a lot of little thing because that guy just dislikes me. I don't think he just not just disliked me--He dislikes Asian at all. First of all he complain about my fingernail. I cut my entire fingernail. And then he start to complain, maybe my ring is getting too big. It's made it heavy. And I change my ring. And I still have a lot of thing to do about something else. I go straight to the personnel. It's no rule that you have to cut your fingernails. It's no rule that you cannot wear; you know, your big ring or jewelry, anything at all. How do you take that--take advantage or what? I left that job to another different apartment.

That girl, she cannot stand me because...not my attitude, but the way I dress up. Everyday she come to me say, "Why can't you dress something normal. Why you have to dress up to it in the evening?" But I want to, because I try to make the best of it. I'm not dressed like a prostitute, too short and too sexy. It's just something that I can't make it to fit myself right. And besides, I don't owe her any explanation to tell her where I should wear...because at my job you wear everything you want. You can wear jeans--anything I want. But I'm doing the opposite way. Instead of wear the clothes like professional dress that I wear during the day, and I have no time to change. I come to work in evening. I don't have to explain to this girl what I should wear, what I shouldn't...because that's my business, none of her business. If I work during the day I know I cannot wear jeans, but just fit me perfectly right to the people during the day. This is the bank rule, O.K.? And I just got the feeling she dislike me. And every time I come and she seem to be like, "You shouldn't do this. Why you live in your country?" And it's a lot of thing that she doesn't believe what I said. And I found out she get angry because she lost her brother in Cambodia. That's not my fault. How should I know about Vietnam? I'm only human being too. And a lot of thing that I use, they always ask--you American wouldn't ask each other--"Is that real? Is that jewelry you wear, is that real?" You wouldn't ask like that. But for me they ask.

Q. Oh, they ask if your gold necklace was real they think it might be phony or something...(SP: Yes.) Well why do they ask if your gold necklace is real?

A. I know.

Q. So you felt put down by that? (SP: Yes.) Like maybe they think your gold necklace is cheap, or an imitation or something?

A. This is what I mean. I have beautiful diamond ring from my husband. And everywhere I wear, and at nighttime, when you run the machine it sparkle. They say, "I have to ask, `Is that real?'" I say, "Yes." But I can see the funny look. You know what I'm saying? That's not real. Why they bother to ask?

Q. But do you think that they think you're unworthy, that for some reason because you're Cambodian you're not worthy to have a beautiful diamond ring?

A. Yeah. They don't think I'm worth it to have any diamond. They thought everything I use it's from the costume jewelry. Even, you tell them the truth, they thought you are lying. They dislike you more and more because of that. And some reason they couldn't figure out why you make all of that, you make the same money that make, and still I have brand new car...

Q. Yeah. How can you have a diamond ring when you're making the same money, and the...

A. Yeah. And compared to I have new car and everything. I mean a lot.

Q. So how wide spread, I mean in your opinion, how common do you think is the racism towards--I mean we'd call this racism in this country--the prejudice towards Asians. Do you think it's an everyday experience you have, or just occasional?

A. Even still now...(RM: Even now.) Yeah. But I get stronger and stronger.

Q. You're getting stronger and stronger.

A. Yes. I learned from that past life the step to push myself to getting up, because I figure out that's not my problem, that's their problem. I remember the girls--it's not surprise me that the girl I work with right now she from here, and she never own a brand new car. And compare myself to her, and she keep asking me, "Are you a mistress or something?" How could you take that? It's insulting to me. I said, "No. I just know how to use money." I make the same money they make. I make the same hour they make. No. I make less money than they make. But yet I have more there, I keep taking care fine. But they ask me how. I say easy. Save it, and know what you got. They still don't know how.

Q. Yes. I understand what you're saying. Do you think it's a class issue? Do you think the lower-class people in this country are more racist than upper-class people, or do you think that it's at every level?

A. To work in a factory I have more people who dislike me, because they know I'm comfortable. (RM: More people dislike you.) Yes. And the more right now--I work for the state. Not many, but still some I feel so uncomfortable, especially with people who get so close to me, they know what I been through; but yet, I still go to work and smile and dress up the way I want to be.

Q. Do you think that having had the experience of *Pol Pot*, stuff like that, I mean, do you think that the average American or the people you work with like to hear about it? I mean if...

A. Some they would love to hear, but some they don't. Some would like to hear, but some still don't believe what I'm saying.

Q. They don't believe it. After all these years they don't believe that...

A. They do believe, but they thought--some would be, just let it go. Some worker are very interested to hear that from the beginning, but when the story getting deeper

and deeper, they seem to be--they cannot walk out, because they are impolite to do that. But yet they are rather not to think about it.

Q. Do you think most of the people you work with--when you come right down to it; they really don't want to hear about the *Pol Pot* story. (SP: No.) How's that? Do you think they can't handle it, or they can't relate to it, or...

A. I don't think--It's very hard, because the close friend of mine that I tell her--seem to be like--she lost her husband. I was there in that position. I tell her exactly how I feel. And seem to be like they probably thought I know too much in too short time. You know what I'm saying? Like from nine year. How should I relate myself to everything, and actually survive? I'm not relating, I'm not acting, and I'm there. I saw who is suffering to see her husband die day by day through cancer. My husband not die day by day, but I have saw people who died day by day then my father, my brother, and my children. I can relate to it. Yeah. Even ask me like, "But why you come here, you act like nothing?" Some people probably like to see you feel more miserable or being mourner, but I'm not. I always make up something. I always sing in my mind. Sometime they have to stop me in a friendly way; sometime they do in a nasty way. That's nothing can stop me. Because the minute I walk into the state to be a state employee, after they give me a very hard time for six month, I sat up and said I have to be myself. If they cannot take me the way I am, they're not my friends. It's not worth to make friend like that, and I did. Even now I take break by myself. I go to lunch by myself. I do everything by myself. If anybody comes to me to be my friend, I still friendly; I still say "hello" to anybody who come in front of me. You know, I make myself friendly with anybody that I feel like they are friendly. If somebody like me, they dislike me that am not my problem. That's their problem. This is the way I brought up, very nice and friendly. You cannot take it, fine, you cannot take it.

Q. Now, so do you have any close American friends now?

A. I do. Yeah, I have a very good friend. She's a first teacher of mine. We still keep in touch. She's closer than anybody else in the world. She's live in New Jersey. And I have another--my second, my first tutor, and she become very, very good friend. She lives in East Greenwich. I have another friend who work at Citizen Bank that been through to the way my supervisor treat me. She's the one who stood up to tell the personnel what that my supervisor did to me. We still keep in touch. And another--I have not a lot, but a few good friend that I can count on. I don't have to worry end up on the street, which is anything happen, I knew they have a room that's available for me.

Q. Now what about Cambodian, do you have some close Cambodian friends here?

A. I don't think so.

Q. You don't have any close Cambodian friends?

A. I shouldn't say that, because I never make myself close to them.

Q. Why is that?

A. The thing is I always brought myself so far apart from them when I go to school, the way I dress up. It's just the way they judge me different. They judge me; they thought I am more of American type that's not their type. They respect me more. You know what I'm saying?

Q. Well the American type plus you were from a different social class, I would imagine, from a lot of the Cambodians. (SP: Yes.) So they can't relate to you maybe, because you're from a higher class.

A. I shouldn't say higher class, but the way they thinking, yes, because I don't think Cambodian would come ahead and ask me to go out because they probably said the answer is "no." They didn't even try. Even they see I'm going to the party alone or something like that, they never thinking how lonely I am. They thought I probably don't want to bother with any man at all, but deep down I just...

Q. You don't go to the new years, the Buddhist new years--do you have friends there?

A. I have a lot of friends; I said they respect me, as like a good friend, but they never thinking about being romance with me. (RM: Romantic.) Yeah, it's romantic at all. So it's very, very awkward about it.

Q. Yeah, well you know, this is a--one of the things--I mean this is a--gets into an interesting problem of, you know, one of the hardest things for any woman, from another culture is when they begin to date or have romantic relationships. You know, and how has that been for you? I mean first of all, on the Cambodian side how has it been a single woman in relationship to the Cambodian community? You were talking about that little about men don't want to ask you out. What's that been like for you?

A. It's very difficult for me, because being a good girl in Cambodian society is difficult, society is very difficult. I think its have a lot of thing to do because of beauty too. I'm not very, you know, very pretty, but woman would feel uncomfortable if I become friend with their husband or even with both of them, because there are lot of thing that woman want to be like me but she didn't got to a chance to be like me.

Q. Well, when you say "being a widow" I don't understand, I mean what do you mean...

A. Well, when my husband lost to Cambodian they call *Maemay* (widow) right now.

Q. And so you're a widow, so what, so what? I mean what's the problem.

A. It's scary because if I make a friend, according to the culture right, if I make a friend with somebody husband I wouldn't bring another problem to his wife's jealousy.

Q. I see. In other words, you may have an affair with her husband.

A. Yeah. If I make a friend with a single man, that guy, he probably figured I didn't need somebody who really needed him, and I don't. And if I--that' why I end up don't have many friend, American Cambodian friend.

Q. I see. But is there a prejudice towards the widow in the culture? I mean, you know, like there's something wrong with the widow, or...

A. It's very hard to be a widow in Cambodian society, because it's very--you have to know your step how to walk. Other than that, you really concerned about your culture. Every step you do. You damned you do, you damned you don't. I have a very good friend that finally we end up the relationship--we end up stop talking because his wife jealousy. Very, very close, and very good friend, and the jealousy getting so high and so big that make that man become falling in love with me after she repeat my name again and again and again. And yet, according to my age not many Cambodian in my age, not many Cambodian men around my age or a few years or younger, or a few years older would be single. They are married or divorced. And I don't want anything to do with divorce that have children, because it's very, very prejudice about step-mother, because they have old, old story about being a bad step-mother. You know something like that?

Q. Yeah. Now let me ask you a question. How can the community--I mean, the community doesn't like, is afraid of the widow, yet in the modern time now, I mean, most Cambodian women are widows. So they're going to get rid of all the widows? I mean, in other words in a historical period now, where most of the Cambodian women are widows.

A. I know, but the thing is...

Q. So the community doesn't make an adjustment to that? They don't say, "Gee, most of the women in our community now are widows. Let's try to accept them." They don't say that?

A. I don't think they ever think about it. What they think the most is just to take their husband away from you, they'd be all set. Even I guess, some friend who stop by for a cup of coffee, I can hear the phone ring two or three minutes after, "Is my husband there?" How do you feel, how can I relate to any friend? I mean, the society yes, but I would said they never stop to think about it. What they think is about their family, their own. And not many educated--I didn't say none of Cambodian is very educated, but I think that's never thinking about other human being life. They never being put themselves in that position. Some American would put your life in that position. Imagine if I were you. Imagine if you were I. But not many Cambodian women are like that. (RM: But what about the widow...) Same way, or you think it's the same way, or maybe I could be wrong (Addressing Svang). But this is the way I feel.

Q. But what about the Buddhist concept of compassion that you need to, you know, it'd seem to me you would want to be compassionate toward a widow because of all she's suffered?

A. You have no choice because there are no many men around here, not many men. And, is another chance of the take advantage too, because some men, some Cambodian men here, who have--who are married, but he still has... (RM: The girlfriend.) ... Who is with their own people I cannot say that, but the thing is...to choose to be a widow, you choose to be. It's not what you have to be, but you choose to be. If I don't want to be a widow, I can get married with anybody I want. Not everybody I want, everybody that I figured out I have to sacrifice something for that person, but I have to broke the rule a little bit, open up and tell the Cambodian O.K. I'm available. You know, try to make thing go on. She chooses to be a single, but I choose to be it too. I figured out the day I get married again, I want to be with somebody who at least easy going, would mostly make me happy.

Q. But how are people in the community going to know you're available to be married if you tell them you're not? You may be turning a lot of men away. You may be turning a lot of men away, don't you think?

A. I know. They know I'm available. They know.

Q. They know you're available?

A. Yeah. They know that, but like I see like some man, who just, before they brought… they just figured out--I think it's a lot of thing to do this a one thing that I--I'm not blaming myself, but I know the big issue is...love to be with Cambodian, but it's not many Cambodian that I--I want well educated Cambodian, who would be understanding.

Q. Now what about a confident, I mean...(SP: Confident?) Well I mean a confident (with a sort of French accent), someone who--as a widow, I mean, as a woman what special person can you tell your problems to if you're sad, or--I mean do you have to keep this all to yourself, or there's a man that, you know--say you have a problem, and you'd like a man's advice on it, who would you go to?

A. I think I always go to a woman. I never talk to a man about that. But I did, through my night job, my interpreting job, like sometime I see somebody been through, even a man or woman, in a nice way, not because I want to make out with him. I just said, "Anytime you want, you can call me and talk to me. I would love to hear that."

Q. But what about here? Do you think that Cambodian women can go through life without having a man to help them with some of their problems? I mean, would you like to have someone you could...

A. I like to have someone that I can share, a good shoulder to cry on, but it doesn't mean you have to live without men according to make your life going. I can live without men for, how many years? Nineteen seventy-two until now; I just begin the relationship lately. But the thing is...to be a single life, your life is stable. You feel lonesome, but you feel confident, you feel comfortable. To deal with love, your life excited, happy, sad, and jealous and fight. (RM: Yes.) But you say, "no pain no gain." You want to take the pain. You gain. You take your chances.

Q. So you have to be ready for that roller coaster that goes up and down.

A. Yeah. Or you want to be stable. But for the moment--I never realize I feel so lonesome until I bought this house. This is what I'm calling human wanted. After all I know I'm only human. I thought when I work busy, and I got the house, maybe I don't have to worry about anything. I come home; I deal with my own home. During the spring or summer I do my own gardening. I have nothing to worry about my lifestyle. But I was wrong. When I come to this house, I figured out, what's this for? I worked so hard to get the house, but it's nobody to share with. Then I start to thinking, how about my other life that I used to be. Why can't you take a chance to do that? But I blow so many men. I just scare them away that the time that they are ready, I am not ready. Now the time that I think that I want to be with somebody, they're all go away already. But yet, if they want to come back, it's not the same anymore.

Q. So you dated some Americans?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. What was that like for you? I mean how was that?

A. It's difficult; because I'm talking about read the wrong book. That's the main idea always talking about...(RM: Read the wrong book.) The American men read the wrong book, because they thought Asian would be like to please you, to serve you, to walk behind you, which is the wrong book, because the book that--*Sophan* chapter is different because...out of my way, not demanding, but equal. I cannot serve you all the time. I'm only human being too, to be equal. I make you happy. You make me happy. Trusting and I have my freedom. Not the freedom to dating another guy, not the freedom to fooling around, but the freedom to cook when I don't have to, to go to see the movie that I want to.

Q. And you think most of the American men want you to be slave like? I mean the men you dated.

A. I think it's the same most--because the first guy that I dated, yes. He's very, he's kind of--I'm surprise him.

Q. You surprised him?

A. Yes, because he thought this is a Cambodian that I been known about. I mean... Some Cambodian would keep the way it is, that she like to stay home, take care the baby, you know, being a housewife. But not me.

Q. But are there American men, you know, I mean they say American men, with the women's lib movement and now...that American men are more sensitive to being equal with the women.

A. It's hard. This is happen from my present relationship right now, because he think I'm to good for him. Compared to what I have, compared to what he doesn't have, and he feel insecure. (RM: Yeah. He feels insecure.) But, first of all I'm getting so angry because what I want, that's what he has. But he doesn't admit it.

Q. Yes. Well, what is that you need?

A. I don't need money.

Q. So what does he have that you want?

A. I like somebody who make me happy, make me laugh, good sense of humor to be with, and to sharing. That's all I want.

Q. So he has these personal traits?

A. Yes.

Q. But he thinks because you're more successful financially it's...

A. He wants to find, you know, he want to make more money. He wishes he could give me more that he has. But which is--I don't maybe would be in the future, I don't know. But right now, I don't ask for anything, because I know I got, I got money. Everything I earning here--what I believe, if you want to do something, and you work hard for it, you will get what you want. And I know he can do that too.

Q. Oh he feels insecure around you?

A. Yeah, in a way, yes.

Q. And you can't work that out? I mean you can't come to some...

A. I cannot tell, because it seems so new that we just talk about it; and it seem to be like he's not really sure, and I'm not really sure myself. I admit that I might be in love with him, but somehow I cannot love somebody who didn't have strong love the way I love him.

Q. So you love him, but you're not sure how much he loves you?

A. Yeah. So even I love him that much, I'm not going to force myself to love someone that's not appreciating what I am. So I rather to learn how to love the way I do with my husband, which is fine I did that before, but I think it's...

Q. You don't want to learn to love a man. You want someone who...(SP: Really appreciate what I have.) ...Will appreciate you, yeah.

A. And, you know, and work after that.

Q. Yeah. Are there tensions? I mean, when you have a relationship with American men, are there racial tensions that come up? I mean, is the Asian, the fact they're American and you're Asian a problem? Is it ever?

A. The language problem it is not the big problem, it's more--it's a--I don't know. You use a lot of slang and impression. And I still have not much word that I knew about it, the impression, and I keep ask. And it sometime I make it as a joke. But sometime it's come too much that I getting kind of aggravated. I figured out, I stuck myself, but I can figure out that's not right. I should go back to school to learn more about it. But yet, I told myself, I been doing so much. I should give myself some credit. I have to be sure that, if that person love me, they have to

love me the way I am, because I love him the way he is too. But, it's very difficult because when everywhere that I go out with any guy that I date with, I get a special look for the crowd, from the crowd. I don't know because I am Asian or because I am attractive. There are two things I cannot figure out. I can feel like the first boyfriend when I walk in, he told me himself he feels so uncomfortable because the way that everybody looks. First of all I thought maybe because I am Asian. You know, because when you see somebody different, you not just look once, you look again. And you try to figure out what nationality she is. And I got the same feeling. But for a while you get so used to it, you say, "Not because the way I look, because what I am that attract people." First when he feels uncomfortable, then he starts to enjoy being with me. And the accent...when we talk, you know. And sometime people just stop and ask what nationality I am. If they been to Thailand--and I'm a very, very, not too open, but I'm friendly. If anybody said to me, like American stop to me that I been to Vietnam or Thailand, probably ask where, you know, about and the way I know. I'm very easy to talk to, but it's not talking about going to bed or anything, but just socializing, to talking about what going on. I am very open about that, which is I don't--it's not many Cambodian are like that, because I can--I have many Cambodian friend who very shy. They are afraid--even they talk to you, they never look straight at your face. They look down, or they look the other way and talk. You will find out when you get to know more Cambodian. I am different. One thing, that I feel very confident with anybody. I don't care what their title is. I don't care what is. I look straight to their face because I feel confident. I am talking because I am *Sophan*, because me talking. I don't care what title or what--you like me the way I am, fine. You don't like me the way I am, tough. That is your problem.

Q. Yeah. Sure. And do you think that makes people uncomfortable?

A. I think so. Yeah. That's why many Cambodian feel uncomfortable about it. And it's making American feel uncomfortable too. You don't know what your thought, because American like to face--face to face, talk like that. And American-Cambodian not likes that. They are very shy. They talk away. They smile, or they humble. You know what I'm saying? (RM: yes.) And beside, one thing that has helped me through that problem little bit easier, because I'm a woman. I'm very confident, because I can deal with men or with woman--because with woman, I figured out she is a woman. I am a woman too. A man I figured out American always have some kind of feeling for, I don't know for women, woman, that they treat woman nice. They gentlemen treat from the beginning. I don't know for--sometime are you still--you know the gentlemen treat is not last very long. But some, the first time you get to know them you thought you are gentlemen. This is the way my experience is. By the time you get to know him for a while, you found out he's a jerk or he's not a jerk, O.K.? But I'm feeling confident when I'm talk to anybody. I'm not afraid, and that is make a big difference between Cambodian and myself. I'm not talking all Cambodian are like

that. It's not many. And I don't know if Svang, you probably feel confident too when you talk with anybody?

ST. No.

Q. Do you think that the--have you met any of these American types that have a very romantic notions about Cambodians? (SP: It's just a coincidence like...) You know what I mean, there's like a lot of people, I mean in our field we've known a lot of people who have worked with Cambodians, so they sort of--they--there's a lot of Americans... I mean have you ever met a man who wanted to date you. You know have this fantasy... (SP: Because I am Cambodian?) Yeah. How wonderful you're going to be because you are Cambodian, or these social work types that, you know, have a thing for working with Cambodian refugees? You know, refugee types or...

A. Yeah. He's...he do that. You know, there are some American men who do that. First of all he do similar to what we do right now. He learns about dream. He's a psychologist. He's very, very nice man. And then we start to date a few more time, but thing not work out, because around him I still feel like he's my psychologist. I feel like he's interview me, no matter what he tries to be romantic or not. Bur it's just--and I don't think I'm ready for that situation yet. So then I let it go. But we become very, very good friend. I think if I am have stronger feeling with him then, we probably, you know, end up something, but on that time I don't think so because I always picture myself like I'm not good--not being good enough for him. I figured out I'm not ready for anybody. And it's some American men who go out with me because of me. They didn't even know what nationality I am, because... I had nice compliment about I'm very friendly. The way I brought myself is different. And even the doctor that I work with, he keeps saying, "Who say Cambodian are shy? It's not this one. Who say Cambodians are very quiet? It's not this one." I put it this way, I--I have sense of humor, but I think some Cambodian woman would have their share their sense of humor when they are in a group, or they are--you know, their nationality. But I seem to be I work separate from them. I work in a group of American. I have to use my sense of humor for a lot of thing. Even sometime I didn't realize I had a sense of humor, but a accent...it--you know, they probably thought it's a funny thing to hear about that, and I'm not afraid to ask. One a great deal about, the state employee the other day one of the girl who work close to me, she said like she leave early; and she tell me, "I have to go to..." I ask her, I say, "Where are you going?" And look at this girl, she just bought a house the same time she bought a--she bought a house the same time I bought mine. And she said like, "I go to see a man about a horse." I thought she going to buy a horse. And I keep--"Are you buying a horse? what for?" They take it as a sense of humor. Honestly, I thought she buying a horse. I didn't know she said mind her own business, you know, why you bother to ask. But she say in a nice way that she's going to see a man about a horse. And I take

it seriously. I say, "You going to see a man--you buying a horse?" And they all start to laugh, but it is just I. I'm not--and even they laugh...they are kind of laugh: they laugh with me, and they laugh at me. I have a lot of laugh at me, or laugh with me, but I cannot--I used to worry about them. Right now I cannot control it anymore. I figured out that...

Q. With a man, what do you think is your biggest fear? I mean, you know, say you really met a man who was very nice and who liked you, and you liked the man, what would you think would be your biggest problem, in terms of having a nice... (SP: Trust them.) Trust. What do you mean by that?

A. Because Asian--when you have intercourse with somebody in your heart, in your mind, he is your husband, to me. Americans take time. And you set to build more relation—relationship together, to be sure, to getting stronger to get to know each other longer and longer. But to me, maybe the way I brought up, I figured out, if I love somebody, if I decide to sleep with somebody, I did make my commitment. I would try to do everything to save that romance, that relationship. But that's me. I'm talking because I'm Cambodian or American, but that's me.

Q. But you think the men might have a different attitude, because they really a...

A. The men would--yes, because the man would need more time.

Q. More time. So they may sleep with you, but they may not think about you.

A. Yeah. That they not think--they not love enough. So to me, to make love, it loves. To American, to make love, it sex.

Q. Yeah. So how have you dealt with this? I mean how do you deal with this thing? If you know this now, how do you handle it?

A. I take a negative attitude to work toward my therapist. I figured out, I done nothing wrong, I'm only human. I love him, but he cannot give me, he cannot love me the way I am...there are plenty people around here, or somewhere, or...

Q. But how do you know, I mean, how do you know that you haven't made too quick a decision? Yeah, you may say, "Oh, I love this man. Now I'll sleep with him." But the American man may say, "Well I need another need another year or two to get to know her." You know what I mean? So how do you know that--you don't really know this man, you know, that this is just something you decided.

A. This is one thing that I still work on it, because I trust people so quickly. But the person that you feel like--this is the new relationship that I just have, but I can feel different compared to other relationship, because other relationship I never feel love. I feel like I want to get to know him. But with the new relationship, I feel

like this is right, because a lot of thing that this man have from the beginning remind me of my husband. The smell, the attitude, the joke, the compliment It's a lot of memory that, first of all I see him, but I saw my husband face in there. Eventually from time to time, I figured out that's not my husband, that is somebody else. But I have to tell that person the truth. Now I see you as my husband face, but it's not your face. Eventually I have to face truth. My husband is gone. Because the love it's make me love another person, because the attitude, because there are a lot of thing common like him. But I don't think--I don't know this relationship would work or not. But even this relationship is not work, I'm not regret. I would be pained. It's very painful, it's would be hurt. But like I said, I wouldn't know until I found out. But I figured out anything in this world, if he wants to work with me, its other way that you can work it out.

Q. How do you know that the man is earning your affection? I mean, over time, I mean how do you know that, you know, I mean what do you do to make sure that the man is worthy of your affection?

A. By asking and watching him every time I see him...to much interest, how much he show me, how much interest is on me, or how much he disinterest on me, how much that we act with another, attractive or another different lady around, you know, around me. And talk. Even they say like they could be lie, but I cannot read anybody mind, but I can feel the answer would be true or untrue.

Q. So do you feel now you're--over the next couple of years you're gong to end up getting married? Do you feel ready for it?

A. Yes, because I figured out I want to be--I want to make in this country to be a home. To be a nice home it's good to be--have a husband. I want to build another family, and I hope it would be the same like the family I used to have; but this one would last long. I just talk with the doctor yesterday about a good long conversation with--I have a pap smear done; and I talk with him for good hour, which is I have a lot of opportunity to be a mother again, which is the one thing I want to do the most.

Q. So the doctor told you, you could still have a baby?

A. Yeah, because, according to that thirty-eight woman who been having two children before, it's a piece of cake. (RM: It's a piece of cake. Right.) So, but now what I worry not go on the street looking for a man, but somebody would be, first of all to be a good father, and be a good husband.

Q. So you're looking for someone who can be good father and a good husband, and then you'd have a baby?

A. Yeah, and I care less about money...because I used to have money compare to my country. Yeah, cannot do a lot of things. But in this country you cannot live without money. I got decent money that I can keep my life go on.

Q. So, would you say that now that your number one goal is to create a family for yourself?

A. Yeah. This time I do it for myself. I remember the first time I decided to get married for my parent, not for me. Then I married my husband, and I do everything for him, not for me. And I have children; I do everything for children, not for me. But this time, I find a man I love, would treat me the way I am, because I love him, and yes, because he love me too. If I have a baby, yes, I would do everything for my baby, for my children; but because of me I want to--being a mother again. Is that answer your question?

Q. Yeah, yeah, sure. Well, you've got a lot of rooms here, you know. (SP: [bursts out laughing] Yeah.) You kind go got a lot of rooms here. (SP: So this is my goal. So...) you've got an empty house. You got to fill it up.

A. Well, if only--I need about--not need, I want about three more people. A little boy, a little girl, and a good man, who have a big heart and a strong shoulder.

Q. Sure. You can start out with a canary, you know. You can get yourself a canary, you know.

A. (Laughing) what canary?

Q. It's a little bird. (SP: [bursts out laughing again] Yes.) First you can get a canary, then you get a husband, and then you get two babies.

A. You're right. But I think about that. I figured out eventually. But I cannot rush, so... Some point I figured out maybe some day my--this is the biggest dream. It would become true. But it's not for a while. I fail much time. I will fail it again.

Q. Sure. Well, one has to be ready for these things.

A. I am right now.

Q. Well, well, good. Now what would you say has been--I just want to ask you a few more questions over here--but what would you say has been the happiest part of your life in America?

A. What's been a happy life in America?

Q. The happiest thing. What do you think is--living in this country, what has given you the most joy?

A. Being a good wife, and be a good--being somebody wife, being somebody--no, being somebody mother and being somebody wife.

Q. And what joy have you had so far? I mean in the sense of--if you look back since you've been in this country, can you say, you know, this is what I like about America, this has made me...has given me some happiness. I mean, what about being in this new world has given you some happiness do you think?

A. Because I figured out--because I knew when I steeped to this country, I give up when all my family left me all alone. And one day I get up, I say I have to make my life to be something. And I start work on it. And everything I try, I work hard, and I never failed it. Is that answer the question?

Q. Yes. So that is what your happiness is, sounds like, some happiness, yeah.

A. Yes. Some--not just some happiness, a lot of happiness... (RM: A lot of happiness.) Because I use the past, compared with the present, and think about the future.

Q. So you've used the past in some ways to build a better future?

A. Yes. And it doesn't mean I never thinking about married again. I always think about it, but I'm too uptight to show about that, because it's impossible. I never picture myself who get married and stay home watch the children twelve hours--you know, like a whole day with the children? That's not me. I would like to go to work like--this is the lifestyle I want to be. I hope my dream come true. I want to be like a part-time mother...spend some time with the children; spend some time with the husband. And I don't have to depend on his salary, and yet, he cannot depend on my salary either. We seem to be--we have enough money to survive and have--spend a vacation. I become to be more American because I start to like the vacations, spend some time, and keep the romance going.

Q. And what would you say has been the saddest part of being in America?

A. For being--for miss being a mother. Lonesome. I miss very much...when I got good food I thinking about--I miss being a daughter. I miss my family, because when I--I had trouble when I throw my food away, because so many people die by starvation, special my family. I miss the most being a mother, because it just something that I keep ask God until now, "What have I done wrong?" To keep me going, for being a good daughter, I never do anything wrong--I not never do anything wrong. A big, big thing that I do, I'm being a great, great daughter; I've

been very fantastic wife; I've been a wonderful mother; and I try to make this again. I cannot be a wonderful daughter, because I knew I always been there. But I love to be a wonderful wife and wonderful mother again.

Q. And what would be--I mean, say a man met you fell in love with you, and you got married. What would be the hardest thing for the man, in terms of being with you?

A. I...because still live with my past.

Q. So they would have to...

A. They have to learn how to adjust it, because...I'm very happy in my self, but someday the rain and the snow would make me feel so far away from home. And that feel, being a mother that loves children, being a daughter who lost the parent, it's a part of my life. I cannot separate my life from it. I live with it. And that's all, but I knew I would be a wonderful wife.

Q. Do you think the joy of a new family would make you feel guilty, make you...

A. I always feel like that. For each relationship I have with anybody, some man, you know, I feel guilty. But yet, I talked to my husband in the dream, or some time before I go to bed. I keep thinking if he were alive, he would do the same. Even now, he would end up have two or three children. I figured out I cannot try to be a hero waiting for him. What's improving? I don't want to improve anybody right now. I improve myself.

Q. Well, do you think you could give up--say a man said to you, "I love you very much? In order to have a wonderful marriage and a family, you have to give up that guilt." I'm wondering whether or not some of the past and some of the guilt would create a lot of unhappiness, or, in other words, how much of the past are you willing to give up in order to have a future? Let me put it another way, because I'm not saying the past was bad but I'm saying how much of the past do you think you need to give up in order to have a nice life in the future? Maybe not, I don't know, I mean...

A. I don't think so.

Q. You wouldn't have to give up any of the past?

A. I don't think so, because I love my husband dearly. I love my parents very much, and I love my children too. I forget about *Pol Pot* past...but it just so easy to forget about a sad thing.

Q. Sure. But say a man, your new husband said, "But look honey," he'd say," You love him so much that you can't really love me." In other words that you--"how can I be as wonderful as your mother, your father, your husband?" You know, maybe the man would feel that they're inferior...(SP: They are second choice.) Second choice. So they feel that she loves everyone so much that I can never be that good. What would you say then?

A. Well, the thing is I hope I decide to marry with someone it would be the understanding person that wouldn't try to separate me like that. If they do, it's just like the--to ask like that...I don't know. Maybe its time will tell me. But now, I don't know. And yet, I don't have very secure relationship to think about that.

Q. But you understand what I'm saying though?

A. Yes I do. If come to that point, it's give me the thought like "what would I give up?"

Q. Or maybe you don't have to give up anything. Maybe you just don't have to make the man in your relationship feel inferior.

A. This is what I do. But I probably ask him to deal with reality, with today, because the memory I have--it's just the memory, it's just the past. If that guy good enough to make me happy, I don't have to live with the past. I use the past.

Q. Sure. But don't you think, I mean, I'm not saying that you didn't have a wonderful mother and a father and a husband, but don't you think as time goes by that they get more and more wonderful--I mean, let me give you an example. My father died six years ago, right? And my family was very depressed when he died. He was a wonderful man. After six years had gone by he's like a god now. You know, no one ever talks about his bad side...(SP: Always good. Yeah.) He's like a hero. You know, so when my son was born, I wanted to name the son after my father. Then I decided against it, because the poor little kid could never--ten years from now he'd be so big, he'd be like Jesus and the.... You know what I mean? So how could the kid ever compete with Frank? My father's name was Frank, you know. And I realized, I said, you know--I worshipped my father. I have a very great love for him. By now he has become so big now that no one can ever compete, a kid could never compete, a little baby couldn't compete with my father. It'd be impossible, you know. That' why I gave him the middle name. The middle name is after my father, because I felt the kid would always feel a little inferior because he'd have the same name of this great man, you know.

A. Well, I have my balance because I always...(RM: You understand what I'm saying?)... I know exactly what you say, because I always have my limit, even I love my husband so much. But everybody for five year, you have negative side

and positive side. To be fair with another man I want to get into my life I could tell him the negative and the positive.

Q. Sure, because your husband had girl friends on the side. He wasn't perfect.

A. Yeah, so I couldn't say he's perfect, but I didn't say he's just bad at all, because he's just a human being. The society is making--you know, you live through the society. And if I deal with another man in this country, I would deal with another society.

Q. That's true. Another question I'm asking is whether or not we have the tendency to idolize or to make heroes out of the ones we love whom we've lost, you know.

A. The two heroes in my life--the one hero in my life is my mother. I am never, never going to change that. The second love affair is a big scar in my heart, is my children. My husband, it is O.K. The talk, to talk about my husband bother him is fine. It's understandable, but if I have a child, and talking about my other child in front of him, it make him feel uncomfortable, I don't think I would change the way I feel. But I make it sounds different way, like I love--I love this children, but yet, I miss the ones I used to have. And I knew when this guy ready to be a father, his mind would be ready to have fear with another child. And he can put himself in my shoe. And nothing, nothing can compare, or can limit my relationship between my mother and me. Never. Because that's the power of love that keep me from the day one until now. Without her I never come this far. I push myself so hard to show it to her, even just her spirit.

Q. Sure. And when you have another family, your mother will be they're helping you in the background. You know, I mean, your mother will always be there.

A. Yeah. And yet, I used to hate the copy of her to do to my children, because I knew all my mother did to me is just loving me, and tell me how smart and how beautiful and push it. My mother never likes me to stay down and do nothing. She had a way say, "You have some talent. Use it. Any kind of talent, use it, and make it bright, make it shine." This is the way she does to me. And I would do the same to my child. Show them love. Never ashamed to tell them how much you love them. If your children are not so smart, but to you, yes. Push them and use them, is what I'm going to do to my children if I got a chance to be a mother again. I do get a chance, if I find a husband. (Laughter).

Q. You have a good chance. You have an excellent chance. Well good. Why don't we stop for today?

**Interview 9 - Part 9**

Q. February, 10, 1990...Doctor Mollica and *Svang Tor* are interviewing "SP." We're doing the last interview today, interview #9, and *Sophan*, in this interview what we need is just a--at the very beginning of interviews we have just a very simple, general summary, You know, how old you are, like, for instance… I'm living in Rhode Island, and I have so many brothers and sisters, you know, whatever. So if you could just give us just a very simple, general summary, so that if someone would read your interview they would have an idea of whom you are right now. So how old are you, and where do you live, and what's your family situation right now?

A. Well, OK. I'm a thirty-eight year old woman, who lives in Rhode Island. Should I tell them the address? (RM: No, no, no, no, no.) ...OK, I live in Rhode Island. I'm a state employee, and also work for the interpreting pert-time job; and I have two brothers and two sisters who live in Cape, Buzzards Bay.

Q. They live in Cape Cod? OK. And the interpreting job is sort of for the medical health services?

A. Yeah. Medical group.

Q. OK, and you've lived in this country how long?

A. Nine years.

Q. Nine years. And you came here after you were in a refugee camp.

A. Yeah. I lived in a camp for one-- *Khao I Dang* camp for one year. (RM: You were in *Khao I Dang*. Yeah, for one year, then I live in Philippines for four months.

Q. OK, Philippines for four months... And whom do you live with? (SP: Now?) Yes.

A. I live alone. I own little home.

Q. You bought your home...(voices overlap)

A. Yes. And I live by myself.

Q. And before 1975, what was your family situation like? Who was alive in your family in 1975 before the Communists?

A. Before the Communists I--well I lived in a big family after my--I live with five brothers and five sisters and two children.

Q. In what city was that?

A. In Phnom Penh, in the capital city. And.

Q. You were married; in '75' you were married...

A. I got married in 1968. Yeah. Got married and I got two children, and my husbands lost in 1972. (RM: I see. So your husband disappeared in 1972.) In 1975 Cambodia fell.

Q. And how many relatives did you lose in the war?

A. Sixteen. (RM: Sixteen.) Yeah. Including my two brothers--oh, include my little girl and my little boy when they were four--I think four now, or five.

Q. OK. So right now you have living on the Cape a sister, two brothers?

A. I have one sister who just opened a restaurant in Buzzards Bay, and two brothers who live with her right now on Buzzards Bay. They are both in Coast Guard, in school.

Q. Yes. They are studying to be in the Coast Guard.

A. Yes. This is their second year.

Q. So they are younger than you, all three of them?

A. They are--Yeah. They are the younger, and the sister, the one that opened the restaurant right now; she's younger than me. She's two years younger than me. And I have another sister who is the hairdresser. She live in--she used to live in the Cape, but she just moved in, live in North Providence. OK, she lives not too far from me, also. And she is younger than my other sister, and there are two brothers younger than her.

Q. OK. Very good, so, anything else you want to talk about? I think that's it. That's a good summary. Now do you have any questions? I have one or two questions I'm going to ask you at the end, but do you have any questions, or anything you wanted to add before we finished this interview?

A. No.

ST. We need to know the sayings of your mother.

A. Yeah. I got it. It's my mother always said like: "If you are rich, never forget when you were poor," "If you were beautiful, you never forget when you was--no, when you are good, never forget when you being bad." You know like...(speaks in Khmer). And the other one is when you try to do something, she said like--she compare to the way you do with the, how do you call the palm sugar? Palm sugar. The palm is dipped, drip-by-drip in to the container. And she said like, they take the drip after? Proverb: They say, drip, by drip it will be filled, but if you are in a hurry, and rush, the drip that you save for a long time will be gone. Which means it takes your time to do it, and appreciate what you been waiting, instead of rush into any kind of conclusion.

Q. And how do you say that in Cambodian?

A. (Speaks in Cambodian)... You hear that poem too? (To Svang Tor). (ST: Yeah). OK. And the other way is the dream that some people were born to create the dream so, so big. And my mom always said like, "Don't ever dream too big that you cannot afford it." Like you dream about you could be a queen, that you never can become a queen unless you have a, you know, you related to the queen, to the king. You know what I'm saying?

Q. Yeah. How do you say that in Khmer?

A. You say like a...(speaks in Khmer). It means if you think about that dream. It's so big don't bother. Change another dream. Go towards your dream, but don't go for the dream it's too big it's unbelievable, because some time they talk about the little frog want to big like the elephant. And they keep bloat themselves so big, until they explode themselves until no way they can become to be elephant size. This is what these words mean. You follow me? (RM: Yes. OK.) I don't remember the others.

Q. Now. One question related to the sayings of your mother...Do you think that the--it sounds to me that with all the Cambodian women we interviewed, the sayings of the mother, the teachings of the mother were the most important thing to them. Do you think that the Cambodian men have the same experience? We haven't interviewed Cambodian men, so we don't know what they think.

A. I think that they think the same, because to Cambodian woman, the mother are very close to their children; because they are part of the woman job after you get married. Husband love their children like mother too, but they don't have much time to spend with the children, because he probably go out in the field and make money to support his family. But it doesn't mean they don't love their children. They do love, but memory and what they do together, their mother's always there

first. And special when they get pain, they get sick, and they get scarred in the middle of the night, they probably call their mother name instead of the father. "Oh mother!" "Oh mom!" I mean that's the first word. I mean, when you are baby you learn how to call daddy first, but by the time you realize what going on, the person that you run to is the mother. This is according to my experience.

Q. And do you feel strongly--you said this over and over again--but, that when you were living in the concentration camp, that you gained a lot of strength from your mother's teachings, is that right?

A. Yes, because all those words it's said is right. When I feel down, when I feel so low, I always remember I used to be somebody, I used to be somebody lover, like my mother, you know. When I feel like right now, when I do something right, and I feel--I always remember the past, because that would help me, because when I work very hard, and I complains, start to complain to myself, "Why I work so hard?" And yet, I compare to the past. Like some people they didn't have the opportunity to work hard and make money the way I do. The way I do right now, it's not a lot of money, but compared to people who live in the camp, compare to the people who live in Cambodia, they make about seventeen dollars a year, which is a much different. You follow me? So this is the part where I'm going to say if you are rich, never forget when you were poor. OK? And if you are good, never forget when you were bad, because here I am, I got everything and I been appreciate it myself; but I never use that feeling to destroy my personality. If I used to be in a bad situation...

Q. Yes. I understand. That makes a lot of sense. So you have to remember when life wasn't that good to you.

A. Yes. So I remember the past like, to watch my children die day by day, to see how suffer my children is. So even now, I do everything, but I never forget the past. I use the past as like a therapist. She told me when I feel pain, when I feel happy. Is that answer your question? (RM: Yeah. Very Good.) OK. And the other way, like the last one like you say...(speaks in Khmer). It's the word that they said like--there are a lot of opportunity that for me to do, but I just cannot dream. I never dream myself could be a millionaire. It's no way. But I can dream myself maybe in the future I would be somebody. Have nicer home than this, have fancy car, not work two job, but one job and go to school, maybe become to be somebody mother or somebody wife to live in the decent life and easy, and would be fall in love again to be a...you know, create another family again. So that's...you American probably say it's nothing impossible. It would be impossible if you make the dreams impossible.

Q. Yes, yes. Well, in my family we have the saying, Italian saying which is "See reality clearly, but never give up your dream." You understand what that...

A. Yes. I know what it's mean. Yes. I know exactly--that is also perfectly right, but when the dream getting so big, you cannot do that.

Q. But in this saying it means that you have to modify your dream for reality.

A. That's also right. Exactly.

Q. But you don't give up your dreams. You continue to aspire to something.

A. No. What I do right now, day by day i still learning, and I'm not give up. I'm not a fighter--I'm a fighter. I'm not a failure, but yet I'm only human being. Sometime I fight so much that I sit down and figured out what I've been doing with my life. But yet, I do the comparing. I think the therapist for me I compare from the pain and the happy, the sorrow and the past, and the reality right now. Sometime when I figured out, "Oh my god, at least I can make more money than this." And I look at so many people, homeless people; so many people didn't have the opportunity to do what I do. And sometime I feel so lonesome, but yet look at so many people who have everything, but they never have the love I have.

Q. Svang, do you have any other questions? Do you want to say anything before the...

ST. Do you have any folk tales, you know any folk tales, Cambodian folk tales that your mother told you?

(Both *Svang* and *Sophan* converse in Khmer)

A. Well she tell me about...She tell me about the guy who climbed up on the palm tree, and it's make the thing... (ST: *Chao Chak Smook* says the word in Khmer.) Yeah. He make that thing, and he think he dream he get, keep getting bigger and bigger. He dream about he should become to be a millionaire. And he dream so tall and tall and tall. And finally he forget he was the guy who make the boxes of palm's leave on the top of the tree, and then he fell, isn't it?

ST: Yeah.

A. OK. And the other dream is talking about...one dream that she told me I never forget, she dream about the little frog. That one frog that live in the wheel. And one of the frogs just fell on the wheel too. There are two frog trapped in the wheel. But they cannot go back. One frog look at the sky says, "Oh so beautiful. I really love it." And the other frog figured out, "I want see how big the sky is." And the other frog said, "Oh, about the same size of the wheel." You know when you see up, you can just see the round. And the other frog who been up there and

dropped--it's like somebody who been failures, and go up to see how big of the moon is. But the one that never know the reality want to jump up and see what going on outside the wheel. And from that time they say the wheel start to flow. The one that give up sighs, "So what. Life has no meaning. I know the moon is--at night the moon will come out some time, the star will come out, and that's it. That is life." But the other one who want to see what the life is, he say, "No. I have to push. I want to get out from here to see what the big--you know, how big of the sky, because I don't believe the sky is on the circle this size." From that time, the water starts to flow from the end. And the other one, it's just soaked, let they die, but the one who pushed, and jumped and jumped and jumped, finally he get out from that. And he sees the beautiful house. He sees the green field, he sees the flower and he sees all kind of flower. And that one says, "This is life. Now I see this is the world." That's mean this is mean a lot. To me, I figured out this is the way you never give up with your dream. You have to get on to reality and fight for it.

Q. It's a beautiful story. You can relate to that story I guess, right?

A. Yeah. I am, because I figured out so many my people just let themselves go and flowed to the emotion, let themselves die. And I been push it and push it, and every time I think about it, especially at night time, you know, full moon in Cambodia is mean a lot's beautiful. When I lie down on the swing I think about that. I just picture my mother said that to me. And if this mean this is I am the frog that lives in the whole world, that didn't what going on outside. So I have to push myself, get up. But one thing about human being, you never get enough. You always got more. And this is the dream I have. I always have dream step by step, but every dream I worked for it, and I got it. The biggest dream that I have when my parent, when my children die--it also I lost my country--the dream that I want to do is escape come to this country towards my mother favor question. That dream, I had no idea I'm going to make it, but I prayed and I still worked for it. Everybody run, follow *Pol Pot*. I run towards the gun, to the soldier. I figured out if I die, it's a very short moment. I don't want to die by starvation, or I don't want to die by rape or someone kill me If die by gun, faster. Thanks god I been through that, and I worked toward my dream in the camp. I figured out one way or another it's must be some way or some how that I can come to my dream come true. And the dream comes true. The first time I land to this country, I figured out this is my mother dream, not just my dream. I do what my mother asks. Yet I have to do what for *Sophan* now; because my brother and my sister, they find a way they can go to school. They find a way, the family that support them, and yet *Sophan* didn't know any better, didn't know anything. I cannot speak. I'm not well enough to go to school. I'm being so ill. One day I woke up, I figured out I have to work to do like the frog. Jump out. I can jump; always jump because when you got to know--first of all you get so excited to get into the one apartment by the time you get in. You see everything, and you want more. This is my life

story. I always want more, even small, a bit, but I never, never make to big dream that I cannot imagine. I always make step little by little. I always dream about come to this country. I make a big dream the day I go on airplane. I look back and I say, "Mom, you were right." Now I'm going, I don't know where, I don't know what America is, but I'm going. I did. Come to this country she said. "Mom, you said America is just so heaven to everybody. It's the dream come true. But now I'm here I do nothing I become so ill I cannot even support myself." I have been on welfare for eighteen months. Learn how to speak, learn how to right, learn how to do everything--how to adapt myself from one season to another season, to the weather, to everything. And I am still learning. I keep learning, and learning, and I say, "Mom, what you said. The frog would jump from one to another, until they know the world. And they keep jump from one to another." I jump from Cambodian to America. It's such a big jump. But until I live here, to jump to get the education it's a small step. But it's confusing. I don't know what's in there. I have no idea. And to jump after I know the education, I have to put myself to work, and work combined with all American, but I have no idea. That's a new experience for me at all. I'm just a little frog jump from another world to this world.

Q. What are you trying to jump through now? What's the next jump for you?

A. The next jump for me, it's just to have a nice family, make my life better, and more education.

Q. And do you think you're going to make this jump to you having a nice family?

A. I always work towards my jump, and it worked. But I knew I will work somehow, but I don't know how long it will take. Somehow I have to take my chance. Maybe I would be losing, maybe I gain, but I didn't lose anything yet. I lost my family, I know, but come to this country the jump keep on going. Ninety percent I believe. I didn't ask too much, because I knew I would be a wonderful wife. I knew I would be a wonderful mother. I knew I'm a very good person inside out. I don't think it's any (?) That's maybe impossible. It's nothing impossible, but it maybe. I don't know. But this jump is so big jump.

Q. That's your next jump, any other folk tales that you can relate to now?

A. Well, the other thing is the--I being surrounded by the hear by the butterfly before they become to be the butterfly they used to be a worm; and they start to have the wing, right? And after she become to be a butterfly, she fly around the world, show how beautiful her wings is. And one day she comes down to where that she used to become to be a butterfly. She saw another worm over there. And she said like, "Oh, you look so ugly. Stay away from me, because I don't want you to touch my beautiful wing." And that worm looks at her and said, "You used to be

like me. Just because you have beautiful wing, just because you have beautiful color, do you forget where you used to be?" And that butterfly remembered what she used to be, and she shy. She is embarrassed. This is the way I am. Even I come to this far, but I never forget where I came from. I'm still very proud to be Cambodian. I always like to be needed. I love to help my people the best I can, and if I get a chance maybe I would take another course to be a social worker. I don't know. That is another job I have. I mean as another step for the small??? It's a lot of thing that...when you was young you here the story, you just look at it up, "It's just a story," but it means a lot. When you grow up--right now about the butterfly, compared to reality it's just perfectly right because some of my people look at me they thought, "She got everything. What more does she want?" I don't have every thing. I have something, and I still work towards something too. Something more. So I come to this far, but to me it's far enough, but it's not enough form what I want. I still work towards my dream.

Q. Did--this is a little bit as an aside. One of the things we were talking about is the puppet. (Says the word for puppet in Cambodian.) Did you ever remember seeing puppets when you were a kid?

A. Yeah, you mean somebody using you, is that right?

Q. No, *Ayang* (word for puppet in Cambodian) the Cambodian puppets, the shadow puppets. You know the puppets?

A. Oh, I see. I know, but I never think of...

Q. When you were a kid did you ever see the puppets?

A. Yes, I did. I saw that you play by hand--that thing you screw around and run and jump back and forth. Yeah.

Q. Did you ever remember any stories? I mean did the puppet shows ever teach you any stories? What kind of stories are the--I understand the puppets, they read the *Rama Yama*, and what were those puppets called?

A. Remind me, maybe a...(SP and ST speak to each other in Cambodian.) I heard about it, but I saw just the people who screened it, because in a big country--I live in the capital city, and I don't think ever see that. I heard that play, but I never see that.

Q. You never saw--and the shadow puppets, those folk tales from the shadow puppets, you never saw those?

A. No.

Q. And what about the dance? When you were dancing for the king, where they're any folk tales that you danced?

A. Yeah. It's a similar story like the guy why us a very poor guy married to a beautiful woman. It's an imitation to-- And one day the woman found a prince, like? (In Cambodian). The woman found the prince, and she fall in love, and she go with the prince and forget her own husband. And they always compare the woman mind is sharper than the knife, and… One story, they said like the king and the ...(Speaks in Cambodian) like the king and his assistant who work together to make the king the best assistant who work beside him. One day the king said like, in his birthday, the best assistant said to him like, "From now on I wish you have a heart like a woman, you have a brain like a woman." And he say, "Why you want me to be like a woman?" And he gets so angry. And the guy said, " You don't know. A woman mind when she set up to do something, she mean it and she do it." And the guy says, "By how?" He said like, "Take two lovers who love each other so much, OK? Try it on, and you will see what I mean?" And they went out. They saw one couple are very, very poor. They loved each other so much. In the mean time, the king asked the husband, said, "I will give you lots of money. I will give you everything you need to become to be a rich people in this town, but you have to do me one thing. Kill your wife." And the man said, "No, I cannot do that because I love my wife. Even I'm poor, I'm happy the way I am." Then he says, "OK, you can go home now." And he called his wife to that, "I will give you everything you want. You could be a very rich lady, but you have to do one thing, to kill your husband." Then the wife go back and she think back, and she say, "Yeah." She doesn't want her husband and her to be suffering for that kind of thing. So she killed her wife, because she wants to be rich. This one is mean woman mind...

Q. She killed her husband or herself?

A. No, she killed her husband.

Q. To be rich.

A. To be rich, because when she kills her husband she will get all the power...

Q. So why did she do it, do you think?

A. Because it's mean she loves, but she love herself more, and she have her mind, her mind is (Speaks in Cambodian)--her mind, her decision is more stronger than the man.

Q. And this is true, right?

A. No. This is just the poem to teach that—I remember the best assistant tell him, "I wish your mind would be strong and powerful like woman."

Q. Don't you think this is a negative view of the woman though?

A. I don't think a hundred percent would be true, but we see some around here.

Q. In other words, the woman is much--her mind, in other words she is not going to sacrifice being rich and powerful for the love of a husband.

A. No. Well, the thing is it also go fit to the culture too, because some woman even they not happy with their marriage, but they have to live together because they cannot break, because they don't want to be a bad person in the society. And maybe she's married, they love her or not. Unlike the other one, like the (Speaks in Cambodian), like a woman in my country, you don't have much of freedom of choice. Seem to be you don't live to please yourself, you please the society, and you please someone you love. You never please. You got please yourself.

Q. So you have to be much tougher. So the woman's mind has to be much tougher because she has to live with more suffering?

A. Yeah.

Q. I understand. Let me ask you a couple of other things before we end. This is just out of interest to our work, is that you said that at one point you decided to see a counselor. You went to see a counselor, right?

A. Yes. I did.

Q. And you mentioned this last week. What I was interested in, in your comments about the counselor, just to see how it relate to this, is you said that then, first of all did the counseling you don't have to tell me what you said in the counseling, but was the counseling helpful do you think?

A. It's not help much.

Q. And why is that?

A. Because the things I tell them what I feel, but the entire counselor do is listen, and they didn't give you much advice. It's just listening, and says I know you've been through so terrible. But they didn't tell me you should do this or do that. It didn't help much.

Q. So you didn't find that very helpful, they just listened to you.

A. No, because it sound like I hired somebody to listen to what I been through or to listen to the story is. But what I need--but one thing it odes help, is feel release. You feel like somebody knows. But then I try to--I start to therapist myself. I bring all the bad points up. If I feel like I work towards something and I cannot pass that, I didn't work on that, I didn't succeed yet, I bring to the point like why? And repeat it again and again and again.

Q. The counselor' not???? , Or you figured it out yourself?

A. No. I figured out myself, because my counselor, he didn't say much.

Q. So do you think that the, in general, when counselors are working with Cambodian women, that they should give some advice?

A. I think so, because I am Cambodian I--because in Cambodian, when somebody come to somebody they need advice even good or bad. But the advice, it up to the person, and tell up front, "If I were you, I would do this." But you are different. To Cambodian when they sit sown to listen to you, or to tell you what they been through, they don't know what to do. They need somebody who gives them the advice. Give them two advices or three advices, a good and bad, or the worse.

Q. So you can say, "You can try this, or you can try this, or you can try that." And you think that people would like that better than just listening.

A. Than just listening, because when you have somebody to listening, what is get into you? You sit down and say, "I am listening. OK, yes, I know what you been through..." such and such. What does help? It help if you said like-- this is one thing that I figured out some of the Cambodian, instead of go to psychology they come to me as the friend. But I just give them a wide--I mean, open an open mind. I say, "Look. if I were you I would do this, but you are different." OK? Give them some direction, because when they come to you they are? They are so lost. So they come, find the way, and you didn't give them the way, how can they get out of that situation? Even you give them the wrong situation, at least they get out from that and they will find a way home.

Q. And who would give this advice in Cambodia? I mean, did they have counselors in Cambodia?

A. In Cambodia they mostly go to the monk, the temple, right?

Q. The monk would give advice like that? He'd say these are the five ways to solve this problem, or would he would he just tell you to meditate, or what would he do?

A. The monks--I don't know. Through me, in the monk they had more like a pastor or minister. Monk they have there, you know, their best guy. (Speaks in Cambodian to ST.) The guy that--it's not a hundred percent monk, but he's like eighty percent monk; that he think like monk, but he willing to marry, he willing to have kids, but he think mostly like monk, OK?

Q. I see. So he gives advice.

A. He gives advice. And the advice it would be like the psychologist advice like here too. I mean, you tell them how you feel. But most of them tell you not to do everything, but do this first and try with that, and.

Q. Now how many psychologists did you see? One or two or?

A. Cambodia?

Q. No, here.

A. Me myself? (RM: Yeah.) The first one I see the counselor, and she sends me to one of the good psychologists. On that time they want--she recommend me, I should take any medicine. And when I go to see the psychologist, he say, "No, you don't need any medicine, because you talk and the way you describe your feeling like you been through the emotions, they be passed."

Q. Now, because one of the things I'm interested in is, now who was the psychologist that fell in love with you? Was there one, any psychologists?

A. That is the two or three year after I broke up my relationship with the other guy, and I come to talk because--no, not of one of them. Different one.

Q. So you had a—relationship broke up. You went to see another psychologist?

A. Yes, but its end up to be like he wants to take me out.

Q. And how did that happen? I mean how many times did you talk to him?

A. No, I didn't talk to him--I talk to them three or four time, but every time I'm around him, when he ask me out, and I feel like I am still the patient.

Q. Yeah. You were a patient. Now was he a--what kind of psychologist was he? Was he a Ph.D. psychologist?

A. Yes. He is.

Q. So you went to see him two or three times and then he asked to take you out?

A. Yes.

Q. And how did you feel when he asked you to take you out?

A. Well, the beginning I thought maybe--Cambodian you said likes when the horse gone, go grab another horse to catch up that horse. You know what I'm saying? Run after to get that horse back. Mean, if somebody hurt you're feeling, go to a family that appreciate to be with you. On that moment I thought maybe this is a conclusion to sorry out of the pain I have.

Q. So you thought that maybe that was the therapy?

A. Yes, maybe the therapy, but it's not. Because every time I be with him, every time I talk to him, I still feel like I'm talk to the psychologist. I didn't feel like a romance at all.

Q. Yes. Did he take you out on date?

A. He takes me out on a date a few times, and we couldn't get any further. Even when he kisses me, I just feel like. I shouldn't let him kiss me. It's nothing wrong with him. It's myself that I know at that time I'm not really, because I figured out no matter what he said, no matter what I talk to him, no matter what he try to be nice, to be romantic, to take me to a very nice place, you know, listen to the soft music, but I didn't feel the romance soak in...

Q. Now did he say that his was part of the therapy, or did he...

A. No, he didn't say. He just asked me out. I mean, it just...you know, like girlfriend and a boyfriend have to go out...

Q. So you were telling him your problems and he said, "Oh, by the way, would you like to go out to dinner?

A. No. Actually when we go out we still talk about--mostly I think I probably make him boring because I talk with mostly what I been through, and talk about the pain I have from that guy. You know. But then he still interested. And for a while I figured out it's not worth it, because every time I seeing him, I see as a psychologist.

Q. Then you would continue to see him in therapy too?

A. Yeah. First of all, that's the main thing I get. Now, it's remember it's the main thing, because every time I see him I let my emotion come, and he seem to be he didn't get any further, except, you know, I use--I'm not using him. I train myself, and I take him as a psychologist, as like a, you know, to therapist my mind, to talk about more and more.

Q. And also someone came to do research. Like us, they came to do interviews, and then they fell in love with you too.

A. I don't see in love, or what, because that guy would just...just the problem because I figured out when you go to a date two or three times, they keep interesting to go in more, it's a thing that, you know. And I try to stay away from it.

Q. Why is that?

A. I don't know. On that time I think I always separate myself from everybody who come close to me. I always push back.

Q. Yes. But in his job he was interviewing you about some dreams, is that right? So you told him like you told us a lot of personal information. And then he asked you on a date. See, the question I would have is whether or not you think that was appropriate when they were doing an interview or they were doing the therapy? I mean do you think that was right for them to do that?

A. On that time...I don't know. I don't think it's right.

Q. At the time it was happening did you think it was right, or did you feel a little strange about it?

A. No. I don't feel strange because I needed somebody to talk to.

Q. You needed someone to talk to? (SP: Yeah.) So you were happy...

A. Yeah. I'm happy because I got a chance to talk to somebody who really professional, who can help me.

Q. But they were also combining that with the sexual interest in you too, though, right?

A. They didn't push me to do that. The thing is that they listened to me, and for a while they knew--they respected me the way I am too. That's why--and that, you know, instead ask me... I always can say "no." I knew they not going to break my door and take me to the bed right away. They respected me the way I am, but it's me that let this go on or end it.

Q. But do you think, I mean did you feel like flattered. You say, you know, "Wow, here's this doctor, here's this psychologist, you know, they're in love with me. Gee, I must, you know, this is really wonderful that, you know, these men, they're listening to me..." You know, I mean did you feel in a way flattered?

A. I don't feel that way. I feel like they feel sorrow for me because I knew the reason they go out with me because they want to hear my story from the beginning. And that's what I feel, until they ask me a few more time, and then I figured out, or maybe this evening we will get into somewhere? But I never pictured myself to be in that position because I knew I couldn't come to become his wife or his girlfriend. I just feel that I'm not good enough for them. And I figured out maybe the beginning would start, and maybe they would tell me one way or another.

Q. So you were afraid they would dump you?

A. Yeah.

Q. Well it's interesting you know, because in the--now, you know, in the United States when you have a... Well let me ask it another way. I mean how would you feel if Svang and I were doing this--you know, we've interviewed you a long time now, many hours, and as the process of doing the interview that I fell in love with you. I mean how would that make you feel?

A. Right now? I never think about it.

Q. But I'm saying in terms of--in other words, what I'm trying to say is that you have shared a lot of very intimate material with us, right, you told us very intimate material; but we have collected this material in a very formal sense. We know you through this interview, not through a date. And so what I'm trying to say is that, I'm trying to understand this because we have in our profession, the medical profession, the psychology profession where the psychologist is not supposed to have a--to date a woman, or to have sex, whatever. This is considered bad, because...

A. You explained some bosy's business (????????).

Q. Right--No. Also bad because of the fact that we can take advantage of the patient, because the patient is sharing very intimate material that they develop a very close relationship, and then if the psychologist says lets go have a date, then it's sort of taking advantage of the patient. I don't know if you felt any of that, but...

A. Then, I don't feel like that.

Q. Then you didn't feel like that.

A. But now, I didn't even feel--I figured out then and now my lifestyle is different. Then I never want to commit myself with anybody. But now, It's the picture that I looking for somebody who willing to try to get to know me and go on with the relationship.

Q. And with those two men there was no future really?

A. No. Because I figured out then, even I do, I probably force myself to do so much, because I needed somebody that I can talk to. OK? And now, after I been fair, I been, I would say fair, from my point of view I try to make the relationship work. It doesn't work. So, like you said, I'm not get up yet, because I am, right now, I'm ready to be somebody wife and somebody mother. So it's the different issue, different time, and different story, not different, the same story but this...

Q. Yes. Say you were looking for someone who could be sensitive to you...

A. Yeah. And take me as I am, and.

Q. So having--back then if you had married your doctor, you would have been more like a wife/patient than as an equal.

A. Yeah, and yet, I don't know how much he loved me, or just showed a...you know what I'm saying?

Q. Just liked your problems.

A. Yes just liked my problems, because I think doctor wants to help. And it's maybe I am in need on that time. And one of the problems I found out myself too, is the man who has everything, and come to me, "*Sophan*, I want to marry you." I think to me, the thing that attracts me is somebody who need. The first relationship, that guy who have everything, but I don't like him.

Q. Who's this now? Not the counselor, the first person...not the boyfriend.

A. Yeah. Not the boyfriend. And after like, I mean years ago, and after I end the relationship with him, I have another one with another guy who really need it. He doesn't have much education. He, the guy that I tell you; sometime he act like a baby. I still attracted to him, because I like to help. In Cambodia you probably say like... (Speaks in Khmer) Cambodian word fit the category so well. My Mom always said, "If you love somebody, that's OK to take a--hesitate (?) To help them and to support them." Compare to the rice plant would support the ground, and the woman would support the man just to be a good man.

Q. So if you love someone, it's OK to support him or her?

A. And it's OK to support them, and beside what I'm looking for, not for rich, for gaudy, but everything, just someone has good heart, and love me the way I am, and start from now up. You know what I'm saying?

Q. Yes. Yes, now I understand. I understand.

A. And that's why it's made me feel so pain more after this relationship. I don't ask much. I ask just to try, and love, and you know keep on doing, because in this--one thing he's afraid that I might find somebody else, and dump him. And instead of that, no matter what we do he's not getting anywhere, and I figured out this is the best way to end it.

Q. Yes,

A. But I been through pain. I try to work with that relationship, but...(end of tape)