

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
SOUTHEAST ASIAN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

TITH, VERA T. AND WILLIAM A. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW, 1993
UML 16 (Oral History #93.7)

NOTE: This is the transcript for oral history tape 1 of 1, side 2 of 2.

CONTENT WARNING: Mentions of war, death, and other situations readers and listeners may find distressing.

**INFORMANTS/
NARRATORS:** VERA T. TITH (VT)
WILLIAM A. TITH (WT)

INTERVIEWER: SHEILA L. KIRSCHBAUM (SK)
DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 1993

**SPEAKER (TIME)
DETAILS**

SK (00:03):

In the camp you mean..

VT (00:03):

No, in the communist generation, people are starvation. When I call, I say because maybe why, maybe why people like no generation because people 17 the old people they divide separately. They eat differently because what is called crime open borders or Khmer Rouge right, what's called... And our people because people 17. So you cannot eat really well.

WT (00:44):

When the revolution on the March 18 that their people, they were in the town because 17th of March and they put because my people in the town become the new 17 March. And there are people that they work together to control the town because they hold people 18 March.

VT (01:32):

Yeah 18, 17, 19 maybe, why? But they wear black too, black clothes-

WT (01:39):

Some they do...

VT (01:40):

But they control no people. That's why, you cannot move.

WT (01:47):

That's why they killed 17 people. This [inaudible] my people.

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VT (01:50):

If you not work like they say, "They say you not very good." So it-

WT (01:54):

17 March come in to control the whole country. That's why we call the people in the town because 17 March they control [inaudible].

SK (02:12):

And the all 18 March were the communist?

WT (02:13):

Yeah.

VT (02:14):

Yeah, they all... They say they are all. So they control.

WT(02:19):

They mean they are live outside of the town. That means the group, the Khmer Rouge themselves, they put their name 18.

VT (02:31):

18.

WT(02:32):

All 18 people. That means the all 18, that mean the all person just that every people like eight, and you and me they work together in outside the forest. When they get in they control the all people.

SK (02:50):

And so you were the new people?

VT (02:53):

Yeah. New 17 and you have to work what they say. If they say like "do this," you had to do this. If you not do...

WT (03:03):

Like the 18 the boss, the leader. The 17 [inaudible].

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VT (03:11):

Employee.

SK (03:13):

Now you said you've lived far away from the capital, your hometown was far away from the capital?

VT (03:18):

Yeah.

SK (03:19):

Is that right?

WT (03:20):

But close to the program. Close to the...

VT (03:25):

The stadium, the state.

WT(03:27):

See lived close to the state. The name of the state is called Battambang, B-A-T-T-A-M-B-A-N-G. Battambang.

VT (03:41):

Capital in Phnom Penh. When you have higher education you have go to Phnom Penh. Like in here like you want to continue around college here but if you pass college, you hold like a Harvard something like that. You go over there and live. But this lies in my near mine is very far away, fly to the...

WT(04:03):

Over there, the college if he needs so that we have primary school. We finished primary school, we had to go to the high school. Still have in the state and then they have the college in the state too. After we finish college we had to go to the university in Phnom Penh, the capital. On the university we have the communist.

SK (04:37):

Did you meet at college then, or?

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WT(04:38):

Yeah. We meet at the college and we marry before the communist [inaudible]

VT (04:45):

At the time that's lucky you know.

SK (04:45):

One year before the communist came in?

VT (04:45):

Mm-hmm (affirmative)

SK (04:54):

Is there a special story to the time that you met each other? Were you were in class together?

WT(05:01):

No.

VT (05:02):

We just see to each other by that time. I didn't see him very much, but we know that he told his mother because Cambodia it's different. It's not just, he seemed like he had the other school and the school and when they arrange that his parent go to my parent, that's why we marry that way. It's not like we met in the same school or never talk. I never see him too before, but he saw me. But I never see him that Cambodian culture arrange.

SK (05:36):

And arrange?

VT (05:37):

Yeah, arranged marriage.

SK (05:40):

And the way that works, did you have any choice in the matter or did your parents pick?

WT (05:45):

No we had to... Like me I had to tell my parents and my parents has to talk to her parent.

SK (05:53):

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You did notice her first?

VT (05:53):

Yeah.

WT(05:55):

But we don't talk to each other.

SK (05:56):

You didn't talk to her. But you saw her? And you told your parents...

WT(05:57):

Yeah.

SK (05:58):

And then you talked...

VT (05:58):

Yeah, but I never see because usually Cambodian girl not much, you know, not talk in private, no. Or in public also because when you a girl it's different from here that very different. When I go to school seem like we have... When I have the elementary school they are Cambodia girls school, boys school from my stand.

VT (06:25):

When we go to college we mix not much talking in here, share, no. If you are a girl you sit with girl. But always seem like separate, not much...

WT(06:36):

One classroom.

VT (06:37):

Yeah, one side girl, one side boy. Not much discussing, no. If you want discuss I always discuss with girl and boy discuss with the boy. So sometime they never see it's not sure. That's why I sing in here. When I go to psychology courses I see now a lot pregnancy, a lot problem with that.

VT (07:02):

But we have that too over in Cambodia. Not might happen like that. Why? Because girl and boy not talking so much to each other. Even I learned at university too. We don't have chance too

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much to talk with the boy because that is the culture. When I want the way that the boy or whatever and I want, you seem like a shaking. We shy with the boy, but that is hard that is the culture too.

VT (07:33):

Now when the kid born in here, seem like very close. You see you don't the boy, they never married and here that from I know most Cambodian girl, Cambodian boy, they know before not like me. I never know where but when married, one year I never look at his face very... But that's very hard to look his face very in front. He keep talking, he saw me. The motorcycle, he saw me that way.

VT (08:04):

But I never see and married because we follow parents. Parents say marry and that time we married and we tried. And from now on and at the communist generation too it seem like husband and wife not work together. Husband work far away and I cooking you know in the big building they want me to... They have like 10 or 15 girl cook to survive. Maybe thousand people. When they come from work food had to be ready for them.

VT (08:43):

So that way sometime one week or two week, my husband you know come to see me. Yes, they let to come to see me. [inaudible] not very much but lucky with me and my husband seemed like we meet each other often time. But some family, no. Sometimes they kill husband, why still [inaudible]. That's very strange unless when some time we have spare time we go back sit on by seem like scary.

VT (09:17):

So that's why I told my husband he got laid off it seem like we sit down, you know we do how much we can save. Now we take care of my children bring them go to school, we care them first because seem like very scary. Maybe I mentioned to you or I mentioned to our team teaching over there too.

VT (09:37):

We sit down and say usually when we work together my husband will usually go Friday for lunch, but now we cut it down we save money that way and seemed like he knows a lot like car fixing or fixed somehow in here and electrician he excellent. He can fix everything. So we save that money too.

VT (09:58):

So now, seem like if I have job, seem like support that's my one and only [inaudible]. I want to be rich. That is my middle way. Now I seem like I have survived as good pay my mortgage

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before I didn't rent. Now I rent one family to save because my husband got laid off. I get to share with me because my mortgage is very high too. That's why I'm stay. So my family all before my mother passed [inaudible]. So my husband keep [inaudible]. So now he goes to school, get more.

SK (10:45):

He goes to school now?

VT (10:47):

He go to school too and takes some college course about business. He want to do something a little bit because seem like no work is a very tight, have a single to school and we do a lot of work too now. So maybe sometimes we can do a little bit now.

SK (11:09):

Are you going to [inaudible] next year?

VT (11:09):

Now we discuss... You miss on advisory meeting. See advisory meeting on Thursday, last Thursday, yes we do that and a lot on that day uh early childhood. They have a lot of push and and it's [inaudible]. You a lot of push and we know a lot and a lot of school asking when you there.

VT (11:32):

And Greenhalge school, Mr. Gallagher, why he married his wife was there. He married with Helen and Helen know me and Greenhalge School. We have to go back and after that everyone when we go back and I say, because we don't know. We say we had to work it out and [inaudible]. And then on that day he mentioned don't be apply anywhere else because maybe he want me to try to have one more year. But not very sure yet.

VT (12:02):

But for me, they're asking me, they test me, ask question, how will you feel on working and then I say I love very much, Sheila. I think that program is excellent. It's not even looking at they together. And you see it, look it, we have some time problem. But you know what because people like that there even when I say thinking of this program is excellent as far as I know. They shared it.

VT (12:32):

They didn't know you are when I worked at Greenhalge. Somehow [inaudible] with this Cambodian kid like that. I heard, but in here seem like they don't know Cambodian or Spanish.

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They really enjoyed together, the three year over there. That's why I like that way. They keep asking me like that and a lot of same, I try. They learn very good too.

VT (12:57):

Even understand or repeat but they try very hard. Even when you know that's why I saying, the more language you have, that's easy to live on that I have my experience. I know friend, and I have vacation and I went to [inaudible] last few years but my mom was alive. Even then my husband's friend, we go two car and he got big accident, they get hit from the other car because [inaudible] drive very fast. Did you went there? Very fast drive and hit him really badly. And he cannot speak French.

VT (13:37):

And over then they taught you English too and ask for help with English and they asked, "Can you speak French?" I said yes. I asked called report police ambulance come right away and car got hit on one spot. We had to go to hospital, hospital speak French too. So if my husband and me cannot speak what should we do?

VT (13:59):

That's why I still write in [inaudible] for my children. That's why my children enjoy learning language. So my husband keep my son, my daughter learn Khmer everyday one hour, because it or now when they know more they put them in the regular class before my children belong bilingual. They know you know.

VT (14:22):

So now they say you understand we have mainstream, they go regular. So we don't want to miss our culture because now he write the letter to his aunt, he write in Khmer too. So that's why he wanted. So I say that school time. He has time teach them and he learned more French from me if I have time. If I have time in Spanish too.

SK (14:49):

Yes.

VT (14:50):

My son love it because now they cut off at [Bailey/Daley?] school. Before, they have Spanish lesson, now they cut off. But he knows some, I say don't worry maybe go to high school. Maybe some more but I want him to get a Spanish because this area you know more Spanish because French, I will have more later on. Because now look at our society a lot of Spanish everywhere. So when you get a job, you know English and you know more Spanish and you know about Khmer. That's easy to find, to understand to each other.

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VT (15:28):

If you don't understand when Spanish say ah we don't know. That's hard, that's why I know. That's what I heard one time I will get Greenhage School they say English only. I say I went to public hearing at Smith Baker. Unbelievable. English only seemed like I still remember in your [unknown]. That's good. When you go outside I went to [unknown] something happened. You cannot do English might be you have hard time. How hard you all imagine it if you cannot speak the other language.

VT (16:02):

And you just stay in own pond that's good, very well. That's from I understand that's why I really love the [unknown]. I really give example like that. I think you noticed it's very good. If children enjoy and look at, few children fluent Spanish, understand, I play card, play song, they remember you know body part. They go to Cambodian store they say in English, in Khmer [unknown Khmer]. In there. That's really good.

SK (16:39):

And you're great too you. Everybody will be sad if you leave Demonstration School.

VT (16:43):

I don't know but I like because for me, it's okay, Sheila. I can go find job. Every school now, a principal and by [inaudible] school want me to go to her class to... And a new school and get school year they want me there. For me it's okay but feeling that's really impressed me with the children.

VT (17:07):

We will cry. Professionally I cried because last week Julie left, and we went to see the show at South Campus. Children cry really hard because Julie left, we saw Julie. So seem like hard to. That's why we had Cambodian proverb say, "People come in very happy, when get out very, very sad to get." That the way it is. That's now at school advisory last Thursday they discussed about that, but we don't know yet because the plan is to be changed, have to be rotated. That the point. But we don't know yet, maybe sometime we can change and we can use the two year and I had to go to the other school this year too, that's why [inaudible].

VT (18:08):

When you gave Vera too much school. But now I don't know but just he said on that day, not yet don't go apply everywhere. He will work it out for me but we don't know yet. I love very good, Sheila. I try very hard. Sometimes children not ready to learn or different, but when they ready, it's very good and then it's excellent. That's why I said this program is really excellent.

VT (18:38):

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If all the world understand each other like a singer song. First we know vocabulary like came here. I pull out, I recite the vocabulary to be able... My body go to understand. If you don't have word, how do you understand? First, you had to learn the word. That's why I had to pull out, play games made something different for them to learn.

VT (19:04):

If you have word in your mind, you combine word together and you can speak out. So you can get food to eat easily. When you go somewhere you can speak. That's why I said this group is excellent. This program, did they repeat...

SK (19:22):

Now this question doesn't have to do with the school, but I'm curious to know. The Cambodian celebrations that you do here now that you're in the United States, but especially in your family. I know that Cambodian New Year's celebrated.

VT (19:33):

Yeah, we do. The other one and the [unknown Khmer] is very, very important and [unknown Khmer] is called soul day.

WT (19:40):

Soul day.

VT (19:40):

Soul day. That celebration is very big one. Because in life, we believe that parent or family pass away. We believe because the lifecycle has to be resize. The had to become by. So when the people was that from the believe, they still hang around somewhere. We don't know to get the new life and they are starvation, looking for food to eat and we are alive.

VT (20:10):

So that's right that we believe we make your food, we bring to the temple and the monk pray for them to come get out even some people with something bad and their life, they cannot find the place to reborn. So that's why they hang around. We believe that it's why the big celebration. Everyone never miss.

WT (20:35):

Like my mother passed away and the place that buried her and when we love her so much and we would like to do something for them. We understand that she have a hard time to carry like a problem [inaudible] until to the board, and we have to understand how heart she is carry after the baby born take her to give the food, provide this provide that. Even go somewhere she had to

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carry us. That's why when she passed away we had to do something special for her. This not the time that passes away. This is a year and a year after I had to invite the monk and some people some nun to go over there to pray for her and on the place. Use the picture, here. This my mother's picture put on the stone on... How do you call this?

SK (22:02):

A tombstone in the cemetery?

WT (22:04):

Yeah.

SK:

This was, where was this?

VT (22:05):

In here. Lowell.

WT (22:08):

I think just first one, right, that we bury. The Cambodian usually do uh burn.

SK (22:12):

Cremation.

VT (22:12):

Cremation.

WT (22:14):

Cremation. But I miss her so much. I cannot cremate her. I had to leave her one place and I bought a big land and I bought four place for her and it's a big, I don't want to step on somebody else. I just do around the map and put a flower the summer or I want to do like this just go there and put [unknown].

VT (22:44):

And now in monk they pray.

WT (22:46):

Pray.

VT (22:46):

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That's we believe-

WT(22:47):

Do we believe just only the monk? And they have candles and they have incense. That mean when the incense burn that mean that we can go to... We told the monk pray my mom and then a time a lot of people.

SK (23:15):

Is there a certain day that is Soul Day?

WT (23:18):

Oh, yeah. Once a year.

VT (23:20):

Yes, once a year in October.

SK (23:22):

October?

VT (23:24):

Yeah.

WT (23:24):

It's close to the Easter.

VT (23:27):

No close to the-

SK (23:28):

Memorial Day?

VT (23:29):

... Halloween. Halloween, October. Because that's why I still say because they were like different and know, Halloween seemed like a fun for children. And this really every Cambodian had to be do that because if you not do that, we have like the thing that say the people that was that, that relate to our family, they looking for seven temple. That they didn't see you make anything and pray to them, they will you know...

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WT (24:04):

Cry.

VT (24:05):

They will what it's called cry very hard.

WT (24:08):

Because on that time the-

VT (24:11):

And it's not blessing for you. They don't want to blessing for you to see the very bad new for you. They say like you have something bad that we believe that it's a very big celebration. Every temple and here we have two temple, now because too many people at one. So we just have one more temple near here and the other one near our school. I think the [inaudible] school very big place. Very, very big over there.

SK (24:52):

At [inaudible] street?

VT (24:53):

Quinley? What's it called? Quinley? Quinley Street? Yes, yes. Very big and beautiful.

WT (24:53):

The time we went to Cambodia to her house, my wife's house. Her father bone buried and we go there. We ask the monk to take him out and put special thing where we have build-

VT (25:12):

Cemetery.

WT (25:12):

... cemetery.

VT (25:12):

Monument. We have monument over there. Put them. Seem like make you luck, that we believe. But I believe that's very true come out too, Sheila. We do good things, we receive good thing. That's my believe, that's why we do really-

WT (25:28):

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What's... He pass away in 1979. '79, burry.

VT (25:40):

And this all the bone.

WT (25:40):

... very bone. '91.

VT (25:40):

'92.

WT (25:47):

'92. And the bone still good. We said it's a good bone.

SK (25:51):

But he was killed by the communists?

VT (25:52):

Yeah.

WT (25:54):

Not killed by the communist.

VT (25:59):

In the communist generation.

WT (25:59):

The time that the communist out and he pass away.

VT (26:07):

Yeah, the communist generation. I didn't see him on that time when we go. My husband and me go there let's see while he was there. We didn't see him while there.

SK (26:15):

So he died natural causes during...

VT (26:16):

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Yeah, natural. No seemed like he really starvation or food. Very skinny. That my brother, sister told me, which mean seemed like killing by communists also because very sad, very sickness. That's why he told me.

WT (26:32):

They celebrate for my father-in-law. This is my wife's brother, that the sister come back and married is the school teacher and this my niece. Nephews.

VT (26:57):

The parent. No parent when they were young, that's very sad. My niece and nephew.

WT (27:08):

These five, these five-

VT (27:10):

They're single.

WT (27:11):

... no parent, single. We just have the old sister over here. And when I went there I couldn't believe they have taken care by themselves. No old people take care. We saw surprise.

VT (27:29):

They're very, very strong.

WT (27:31):

When we went there we're so proud that they don't have no parents and how they grow like this.

VT (27:38):

They grow themselves.

SK (27:46):

Did your mother die before your father or after your father?

VT (27:49):

Yes. My mother died before.

SK (27:49):

Of natural causes too but during the communist generation?

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VT (27:50):

Yeah. Then from point is very starvation, Sheila. No food to eat, not enough. That's why sometime they're working hard. But some that my parent die from that way but the other people die from killing, shooting and very hurt with the stick like here by [inaudible]. Very, very sad.

WT (28:18):

Long knife like very sharp.

VT (28:19):

And like this. And that's why I collect what is called magazine and it's called? No, it's not magazine. Geography? I have that picture that's why I bring to show that I do on Cambodian hero, this team and I bring different picture, different story, different book to show them. They really enjoy to ask this question about. So sometimes they say mine is hero too because I have lived, stay alive because suppose we tell them about how Cambodian map is that those like history first.

VT (29:00):

And we learn about Cambodian hero. What is hero mean? So it's come out beautiful even Julie too do draw beautiful; she want to gain money. To be hero in Cambodia. Some say want to be building hospital. Look at the idea. I have a lot of things, keep it over there.

WT (29:24):

These the people they kill they took a picture. This is Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge.

VT (29:33):

Black.

SK (29:33):

That's one.

VT (29:41):

A lot of bone look at this is.

SK (29:41):

Which is not-

VT (29:46):

This is the [inaudible]. It's not like my father was that was sickness.

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WT (29:49):

He kill like I kill animal.

VT (29:50):

This one like animal, Sheila. I shake like this. They go get in line. Get in line and bang, bang, bang, with a stick like a bat.

SK (30:03):

I heard they killed maybe 3 million people?

VT(30:08):

Yeah. Look at these unbelievable, they had this. How they get all this? That's right. I collect you know. When I see something I already pull on together.

SK (30:20):

You teach your children about the history?

VT (30:23):

Yeah.

SK (30:23):

To make sure that they know?

VT (30:23):

Yeah. Because first I told them where I born. The place that I born. Introduce them [inaudible] they know how I escaped. First I live in here, continue education. So everything they know so I point to them about me.

WT (30:40):

Vietnamese soldier. Vietnamese.

VT(30:47):

Look at... So that's my prayer every day. I want peaceful coming soon.

WT (30:52):

My believing: if the Vietnamese don't want it, just my understand, if they don't want it, they just take care their country and leave my country alone. I think no problem plus China's too. China

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they want my country too, you see. I don't know. You see in the communist time, all the time they just took the time to turn for the [inaudible].

VT (31:22):

To make a show to sometimes.

WT (31:22):

And they took the [unknown]. They took the [unknown] to make spoon. You see that?

VT (31:22):

You know what that's why no education. No son, and [inaudible].

WT (31:22):

No, the leader they have education.

VT (31:22):

My different.

WT (31:31):

The people see that this is the capital before communists.

VT (32:02):

My son-in-law this very much.

WT (2:06):

[inaudible].

VT (32:08):

He loved it. He went to work Cambodia, he want to go to see uncle one. His uncle one, but we cannot go because not safe at all. You cannot say I miss it.

WT (32:22):

On a high way.

VT (32:23):

I went there one time when I was young.

SK (32:27):

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What time?

VT (32:27):

Only one time and over there they have let me say people that came to see uncle what that means lucky people even people live around in this place around they cannot go in there. They say that-

SK (32:46):

Who is controlling it?

WT (32:47):

This place?

SK (32:47):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

VT (32:49):

Now they say Thai want it and we don't know, Thai that place. And that's hard.

SK (32:57):

Thai? Thailand?

VT (32:58):

Yeah, Thailand. My son want to go. He do research on his paper, on this too. He went to library and we have somebody's friend research that he say he want to see it. But when I got there I asked let's cannot say, we cannot go unless there is-

SK (33:15):

Well I have that beautiful picture that you brought back when we had the interviews. You handed everyone one that I put it out up on my dining room. Very pretty.

VT (33:28):

That one look at I want to from there. Before we don't have it I bought over there to show my children \$5 when long time.

WT (33:46):

This was very hard to I carry it from the [inaudible].

VT (33:47):

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Oh, my goodness.

WT (33:47):

They don't let you carry it. They take care for me and when I got to Boston, which is [inaudible].

VT (33:51):

That's the one to see, you know. Even my grandchildren later on lucky if they have this thing to show them. Very simple thing and look like my mother made that. That's really show how working hard and so my children never forget. So we save a lot of things. She sew very hard.

SK (34:16):

She sewed that with all the beads?

VT (34:17):

Yep. And spend a lot of time. A lot of time, Sheila. She sit down and do that's very, very you know for culture. That is fun. Usually we do when we go to the temple. That's very important point and she complete just not-

WT (34:29):

They cannot be done for regular.

VT (34:29):

Not regular celebration and special-

WT (34:35):

When they have child. Not a daughter, just a boy become a monk.

VT (34:45):

We had that really [inaudible].

WT (34:48):

Become on Monk and then-

VT (34:49):

That's my son became a monk.

WT (34:51):

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... They put that on the clothe before they get the clothe for the monk. Yellow cloth, clothe. The parent have to uh... that's my son.

VT (35:04):

That's special and she completed.

WT (35:08):

My son become a monk when uh... three months' vacation.

VT (35:10):

He was nine years old. Two month and half.

WT (35:19):

My mom want him to be a monk. To pray something for us. And after that the head monk...

VT (35:25):

Unbelievable. 10 week. Nine years old.

WT (35:30):

We can put it on.

VT (35:31):

And eat only two times a day, nothing else. One morning and one afternoon.

WT (35:36):

Morning and lunch.

VT (35:39):

That's all.

WT (35:40):

You know this... [inaudible] He's the president of the CMAA, too. After him, and then Narin [unknown] after the-

VT (35:52):

You know Narin [unknown] because I saw his name.

SK (35:57):

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Yeah, I know him just through the [inaudible].

VT (36:02):

And after Narin, my husband tried to happen the president to help in 1987.

SK (36:29):

Wow.

WT (36:29):

[inaudible].

SK (36:33):

So this is all in Lowell?

VT (36:34):

Yes.

WT (36:35):

And we look so small just [inaudible]. All I think can [inaudible] made this here how to look for us. That has been very [inaudible].

VT (36:35):

That's right classify look. It's amazing and...

WT (36:38):

And he not hungry in evening and nighttime at all. I don't know that we believe and we put that on and we have Buddha put inside here.

VT (36:54):

Because my son always if he opened the... [inaudible]. That's why I still wonder my son hungry. But finally, he said no. 10 week-

SK (37:06):

10 week?

VT (37:08):

Yes, vacation. All vacation is spent there and come back, go to school with no hair.

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SK (37:17):

Now, do many boys do that? Many Cambodians? It's a very special.

VT (37:21):

Very special. And seem like if you have son like that which mean we are lucky parent because he seem like he do the job like my husband was a monk too. He took his vacation and he paid because we believe-

WT (37:37):

I do that for my mom.

VT (37:39):

He do for his mother. But it's very, he do that very religiously-

WT (37:43):

Like, like we...

VT (37:44):

Look at that my husband over there.

WT (37:55):

We know her for almost [inaudible] way, right? And we are the son, we kno, we try to open way for her [inaudible]. We had the son before the parent passed away to become a monk for her, open the way for her and then see she really enjoy, she really happy. She really peaceful when she passed away.

VT (38:24):

Peaceful, my mother passed away, that true. I believe that's why I see by my eyes.

WT (38:37):

I prepare my mom and another person that I saw by my eyes in the Lowell. Even Cambodians [inaudible]. Maybe not only one son like me, have many children.

VT (38:41):

Many son.

WT (38:47):

But he have a [inaudible].

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VT (38:52):

Oh my God. [inaudible] I go to see it when [inaudible]] he passed away. Unbelievable people pass away.

WT (38:54):

Had the monk come to pray for him. They still not [inaudible].

VT (38:55):

Did you ever see people pass by your eyes? I have two. My mother, no that very carefully is two, he one that my husband just say the man in Lowell. Oh, Sheila. Had to pass away. But my mom at Saint Joseph Hospital. My mother in law, it's a very peacefully. Peacefully.

WT (39:27):

You know what? After that I tried to find out what's going on then I know this when people like young like me are very peaceful for the you know the...

VT (39:27):

God [unknown].

WT (39:27):

[inaudible] then in this let's come to you when the [inaudible]-

VT (39:27):

I believe.

WT (39:27):

[inaudible] before she died. You will see what happened. And my mom passed away go like a sleep. Easy and then [inaudible].

VT (40:07):

Unbelievable at Saint Joseph.

WT (40:07):

And one another day I believe [inaudible]. Maybe with time. Talking of [inaudible] with time. Go the temple or go to the church [inaudible],

VT (40:23):

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So you calm yourself down that the point I think you seem like everywhere want this, want that. You still want it so your mind is not very put together when you seem like go down. You've seen the way you go. That's right peaceful maybe. But my mother very peaceful. I keep going and sit down with my husband, my children was sleep and very peaceful. We sit and sit until she passed away. Very nicely.

SK (40:58):

One more question I wanted to ask you about when you first arrived in the United States. You said you went to New York first. What was your first impression of the United States?

VT (41:11):

Oh my-

WT (41:13):

When I sit like this like people at the moon. Because my country when we live a big country like [inaudible].

VT (41:18):

Oh my gosh, Sheila.

Speaker 3 (41:20):

When I go to the market I saw everything new in the refrigerator, everything fresh. I so impressed.

VT (41:40):

For me, I'm scary.

WT (41:41):

Coming out of my heart and every word that I want to say I wrote a letter to my country, to my niece, my brother, sister [inaudible].

VT (41:54):

First time I came I still remember on February 18 that the snow coming down. That's my first time, I never see a snow. I will send the sandal from Cambodian and the guy go pick me up very tall man. I say what happened. We scare, I scare. My husband not scared but me very scary. I think because no lie. What should I do? They gave me \$45 and that time \$45 for three people. Yes 45, 15 for each. \$45 and he goes looking for my husband needs over and finally decide we come with him. And they brought us to go to the hotel and leave me right there. And that is the

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first time I never meant. I'm so hungry. What we do my husband come down because at hospital they have a grocery downstairs.

VT (42:54):

My husband come and buy bread and little food over there. I cannot sleep that night. My husband sleep, my son sleep, but I could not sleep. I made a wonderful job to write down to let my son. Because I look at the snow is coming down and I was wondering what should I do? This is the new country for me. What should I do? I keep asking myself. I said what should I do because usually I don't know. They don't they have rice to eat or I'm not because I came in the Thailand camp, no raining about United States because usually I heard when they go after the call to the United States they have training like a six week, six months, six months sometime at Philippine or somewhere else but me, no. When my name was called boom in one day, United States right away. Never stop-

WT (43:53):

Because direct.

VT (43:56):

Direct.

WT (43:56):

We come direct. We not go to the another country like Philippine or Malaysia. Somewhere...

VT (44:06):

Directly to United States.

WT (44:07):

Some friend had to stay. But I don't know why I come direct. They look at my education [inaudible] the communist looking for me to kill more or something like that. Maybe [inaudible].

SK (44:50):

Was there a thing you decided that you didn't like about the United States? Or have you decided that there are things that you don't like?

VT (44:53):

In United States?

SK (44:54):

Yeah. What would you like [inaudible]-

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WT (44:56):

And then they have many country. They have applications like France, Belgium, Australia, and-

VT (45:04):

Japanese too.

WT (45:04):

And then-

VT (45:07):

A lot of countries.

SK (45:09):

You could pick from?

WT (45:10):

And then I pick United States because on that time when I was at the college and university. I'm studying English then I decided oh maybe I come to the United States because I know some English already and French I already study. And we decided to come to the United States.

VT (45:36):

We put application and [inaudible].

WT (45:38):

Before the United States called, the French call first and then we decide we don't want to go there.

SK (45:42):

The French call first?

WT (45:45):

Yeah. And just we didn't decide to go to France. We wait to the United States. And especially my wife have friend in the Switzerland.

VT (46:02):

Usually they want before communist, they want me to go to Swiss too, but on that time seem like balancing. Which way I go? Which way I go? When I go I miss my family. So that's why I stuck with the communist.

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WT (46:16):

You remember then-

VT (46:18):

Then they gave me the [inaudible]. Yes.

WT (46:20):

Khao I Dang.

VT (46:22):

Khao I Dang. They want me to take the Swiss.

WT (46:30):

They remember when the Swiss lady she work at the hospital. She-

VT (46:35):

They already gave everything, buy airline, air tickets for me. But I cannot go. That's why we lucky, we came to the United States. Very lucky.

Unknown (46:47): End of tape.

End of tape 1 of 1, side 2 of 2.

Interview ends