

Several pages of the original transcription of the testimony of Thaly Chhour have been corrected. They were corrected on 2/17/02 by Beatriz Menanteau, at the University of Minnesota Law School. The corrected pages are the following: 2; 3; 5; 6; 8; 16; 21; 28; 30; 32.

TESTIMONY OF THALY CHHOUR, on August 14, 1992, at the St. Paul Cable Studio, St. Paul, Minnesota. The examination was conducted by Ms. Cheryl A. Thomas.

MS. THOMAS: I am Cheryl Thomas. I am here as part of the Khmer Archives Project sponsored by the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee. We're here on August 14<sup>th</sup> this evening at the St. Paul Cable Studio with Thaly Chhour, who is originally from Cambodia, and is here living now in the United States.

EXAMINATION BY MS. THOMAS:

CT: Thaly, could you please state your full name and your address here in the United States?

TC: My name is Thaly Chhour, and I live in St. Paul. My address is 781 East Cottage, St. Paul, Minnesota 55106.

CT: How long have you been in the United States, Thaly?

TC: I have been here for almost 10 years.

CT: When were you born?

TC: I was born in July 8, 1960.

CT: So that makes you 32 years old today then?

TC: Yes.

CT: Can we start by having you tell us a little bit about your life in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge came in 1975? Why don't you tell us first where you lived?

TC: Okay. Before 1975, I live in the village called Preik Hoe in Kandal Province, and I was a student over there. And I remember in 1972, there were fighting close to my home town, and we had to escape from there to live in another place called Ta Khmao. It's about two miles from where I live. And we stay with our relative there for about a year. Then we found a place in Phnom Penh. We moved to Phnom Penh City in 1973. Then in 1975, communists took over when I was there.

CT: Okay. You have been saying "we". Please tell me the members of your family?

TC: Okay. I have my mother and my father at that time and my two older brothers and my older sister and younger sister. So there was seven of us at that time.

CT: And how many are there living today, Thaly?

TC: Now there are four. My two sisters and my mother and I are living.

CT: And when did your brothers and your father die?

TC: They all die during 1976, during Pol Pot time by starvation.

CT: In 1975, Thaly, would you tell us what you can remember about the day that the Khmer Rouge came into Phnom Penh?

TC: Okay. In 1975, it was in April, and at that time my feeling thought that the war is over and we were really happy. We thought that everything would be peace. And it was not turn out the way we thought. During the night, some of our neighbors they try to pack stuff and leave, and so I went over there and try to find out what's going on, and they say they will leave because they will come and force you to leave anyway. Then I went to tell my parents. I told them that our neighbors were leaving, maybe we should leave, too. If we don't leave, they might come and force us and hurt us, something like that. At that time there were a lot of my relative move from other home towns because of the fighting over the home towns, so they came and stay with us, about three families at least. So at that time we decide to pack and leave. We just can get a little bit of food and clothes. We couldn't get much stuff because we didn't have any transportation. So we decide to leave at that time, and we heard that only three day we would be able to come back. So we decide to leave at that time. And along the way it was very crowded. We tried to go back to where we used to live in our home town Preik Hoe. We thought maybe we could just go and stay over there, since we have to move from where we live in 1975. And we could not move much because it was so crowded, and during the night we couldn't see anything. We didn't want to separate anyone. So we tried to stay close together. And we try to go to get some rice along the way and I heard that some people had the rice, fell over and they die and all that and so it was too many people, we couldn't get -- we couldn't get the rice at all. Some just came back and have some rice that we brought along from home. And along the way by the river, we walk along the river, and then we have to stop and try to cook at that time. And when we went to get the water, I saw the dead body by the river and the water we could hardly drink because it's a lot of grease, greases from the dead body. Even when we boil it, it still floated and it's so hard to drink, I remember at that time. It smell so bad even after we boil, still smell but we didn't have anything to drink so we had to drink that water. And we stay for a few day, and then we just keep moving until we got to the town called Trey Sla, so we decide to stay over there and we met my family, met one of our distant relative who live in that town, so we decide to stay with them and then later build a shelter for our own. And while I was there, we all were together in that town. And we went to do some farming, and during cold season we plant corns and all that.

CT: Was the Khmer Rouge there? Were they in that town forcing you to work?

TC: Yes, there was some people who later who told us what to do.

CT: I see.

TC: Uh-huh. And then when we left, that is – that was the new year time in 1975 in April. My brother went to visit our home town during the new year because we have a very close neighbors, very friendly, and he always went over there to stay, like part of the family, so we were separated from my oldest brother. And when we went to Trey Sla, my mother decided to go and get him. So she packs some food and walk for about one day, one night.

CT: All of you?

TC: No, just my mom. She went to get my brother so we can be together. And after that she found him and she brought him along, and because like Cambodian people, we depend a lot on the man. And so it was very hard for her to have my brother. So he can run to get some fish and all that for the family. And after we stay there about several months, then they start to tell people to go back where they used to stay, like in the city, they would take us back. So they lied to us, we did not know, and we kind of feel like it's not the true.

CT: They told you to go back to Phnom Penh?

TC: Yeah, to where we stay, yeah, in Phnom Penh. Any people who want to go back where they used to stay they can go. And so we kind of not really believe in that because it's not true, that's how we feel, so we did not - we did not go until everybody left, almost all the people from the city left and then we decide if we stay we might get in trouble if we stay with just a small, you know, group. Then we decide to leave, too. So we get on the boat for one night, two days or something like that. When we got -- when they got to Phnom Penh City, they tried to swing the boat in. We thought maybe it was true, we thought that, but it was not. They swing in for a couple minutes and then they left again. So we took the boat all night until the next morning. We end up in Kampong -- Kampong Chhnang City, and then we get off from there. I remember on the boat there was one lady who tried to get the water, tried to get the basket and tie the rope to get the water and the water pull her, you know, pull her into the water and she drown. They did not stop. We made noise saying that somebody drown and they would not care. So I remember that part. So at that time we end up in Kampong Chhnang. We got off the plane and tried to find a place to cook.

(Recess.)

CT: What happened, Thaly, when you got to Kampong Chhnang?

TC: At that time we got off- I mean before we got on the boat, they check our stuff and some stuff they just did not want us to bring along so they throw all the document like birth certificates and everything like that they throw all in the water. That's why we didn't have any birth certificates to prove when we came. And when we got off the boat, we tried to find a place to cook and eat, and later in the afternoon they had the truck to come

and pick all of us up to the - to the train station so we can continue our trip. And then we got on the train to Say Sisophon City, the big city, too, and it was so crowded on the train and it was so long on the train I couldn't remember how long. And there were some people die on the train and some people got so sick, diarrhea and vomiting and all that. It was so warm in there. It's so hard to breath and they would not stop. They just keep moving, moving all days. So then we get to Say Sisophon. We get off the train and we try to cook food. Then there were some trucks to come and pick up - pick us up to where we finally stay over there. And it was a long drive and it's far away from the big city, no tropical trees or something like that. And we end up the place called Phnom Traw Lork, it's like Traw Lork Mountain. We stayed by the mountain. So we end up during the night hardly see anything. They don't have any light except small candle and all that. When we got there, they took my brother right away to stay in his age group so they just took him away from that village.

CT: Is that your older brother?

TC: Yeah, my oldest brother. And then the next morning they try to separate us like teenager go to teenager group and adult group go to adult groups. And I was -- I was in the teenager group at that time, and not for long because I'm so big and tall, something like that. They put me in the adult groups. Not for long I was in the teenager group. And then I was separated from my parent and my sister, my older sister also had to go to her group in other place. And not for about maybe one or two months my brother came back. He was very sick. He got very sick. They had to send him home because he couldn't do anything. They let him work so hard, and I didn't know what he did. But after he got so sick, they send him home.

CT: What do you call home at this time?

TC: Phnom Traw Lork Mountain.

CT: That's where your parents were?

TC: Yeah, uh-huh.

CT: Were you there, too?

TC: Yeah, I was there.

CT: You worked in just a different camp?

TC: Yeah, I just work and come back to the village. And then not for long, about a few months later after my brother got home, about a few months later, I was in a teenager group but we had to build a place, a shelter close to Phnom Traw Lork, it's about three miles from there. But we had to stay there, not going home. So I stay with the - my group and work, dig the ground and all that, made the road or something like that.

CT: How old were you?

TC: I was 14. I've got a few months went to live –

CT: You were in that camp for how long when you weren't with your family at all?

TC: I was not with my family until they move from that place to another village called Phnom Ruom Dourl, like Phnom Ruom Dourl Mountain. It's about five mile from Phnom Traw Lork. I heard that my parent move to other place so I went to visit and when they move over there, they didn't have anything, they had to cut wood and build a house, a shelter and stay. And then I never get to go back home and stay with my parent. And my sister got so sick and then she came back home so they all were home except me. And then I got so sick later they send me to the hospital and they did not -- in the hospital they did not have any medicine and people die every day. They swell up and they, got malaria, diarrhea, all kind of disease and they did not have any medicine for us, not enough food. They burn rice and let us eat, it's so hard to eat sometimes just nothing. And when they give us medicine, they gave us some strange medicine. So it wasn't help. And I was in the hospital for awhile. Then my brother after work he tried to come to visit me, walk so many miles to visit me. Then at that time I met him, my younger brother and I told him I kind of get a little bit better, I will ask the nurse to go home because I didn't want to stay. It's not worth it to stay, but they wouldn't let me go home either because they just want us to stay there. If we cannot work, you have to stay at a hospital, and the hospital is worse, it's worse than staying in the village. You have air and all that. In the hospital you only see dead people and sick people, make you feel sick. But they would not let me go so I just asked permission to go visit my parent. They say, no, you wait. So I asked several time and I never got to go. One time I just trying to get over there and try to come back after a couple hours, and then I never get to go again. And later after about a couple months later, my brother-in-law -- my oldest brother came to visit me with some food and I saw him wearing a piece of cloth on his' shirt and I thought somebody in the family must have something wrong, because like when somebody die, we wear a tiny cloth on the shirt and I thought maybe somebody had problems. So he came close to me and at that time we had the meeting, the people in the hospital had the meeting and then I just saw him from far away. And when he -- then I try to go to the corner and met him, and he told me he came to visit me, and I say I have the meeting, I couldn't stay long. Then I tried to ask him is anything wrong in the family? Why are you wearing that thing? And then he tried to make me forget. And at that time I was, you know, I couldn't remember. He just talk about some other thing he said, you know, I brought you some food, some chicken and some dessert. You should eat, you should not keep overnight, they will steal it and you wouldn't have a chance to eat. So I forgot about that cloth. And he tried to go back soon and I had to have the meeting so I forgot completely. And when he left, I thought again, I thought maybe somebody have something wrong but I didn't see him again so. And later I got better. They took me back to where I used to stay and then they moved from that shelter to another shelter and I was over there and I went to work the next day and I got sick again. I got malaria again. I got chilly, a certain time of day every day a certain time I got shaking and I could not go to work. I try but it doesn't work and so I stay and they force me to go and I went but I couldn't do anything. And I came back

and I stay in the shelter. They force me to go. I said I can not make it, and then they told me to go to the hospital again which I didn't really want to go at all because it's not a good place. And they force me to go and they gave me shot before, before I even went back and that shot was a coconut juice in the Coke bottle. And after they gave me a shot and I was unconscious, I could not know – I couldn't speak for about a half hour. I thought in my mind, I thought maybe I die at that time. I thought maybe if I die, I like to see my family first or something like that, and I pray God so, you know, I shouldn't die at that time because if I die, I want to see my family. And then they move -- they move me from that shelter, shelter that shelter with some metal thing, it's so hot, so they move me to like the hay shelter, it's cooler and then they fan me and I just couldn't talk. I knew what they did but I just couldn't talk for about a half hour after that medicine, you know, settle or something. And then I could talk. I was so happy. And then my younger brother, older than me got there, brought me something and I told him the situation. And then he left and then they took me to the hospital again. I stay in the hospital for like three times that I had to go back. I had a big infection on my leg because I have to plant some rice and a lot of leeches and you have to finish the work, you know. When the leech bit me, I just grab it and pull it and throw it in the water and its always come back. They always come back because of the blood that they suck, and they like to suck the blood. So it always came back and we had to finish the work, we cannot get out of the water. And I got big infection and I have to go back to the hospital. I could hardly move my feet because every time I move it hurts and it's bleeding and no medicine to put on. I try to find all kind of leaves, pound it and put it on, it doesn't suck the infection, you know, so I keep trying from one leaf to the next leaf. I was in the hospital for awhile. And finally I found one leaf, it very helpful. It heals so fast and it still hurt and I tried to be very careful. If I hit with something, it will get worse because it heal so fast, you know. And then I got to send back to the village and at that time I found out my father died and then we all stayed together at that time. We got to stay together because no food -- when there is no food, people kind of can be together, you know, because we're so sick and we're so weak, we could hardly do anything, so they let us stay in the village. If you're strong you have to go out to the top group and work hard, something like that. And later on for a couple months or several months, my brother still sick and he had infection on his leg and it stay there, it doesn't heal, it doesn't get big because it's so dry and dehydrated and all that, so it doesn't do anything. And then one day he just slept and did not get up. When we ask him to get up to eat some soup water, he just die. And then somebody came and get him to bury. And over there they don't have any coffins or anything, they just bury you like that, just a piece of cloth and they bury it. And later on a few months my other brother like during that time, we got some rice, rice okay to harvest and all that and we got more food but it was too late for my other brother, he could not eat it, even when we have more. It's kind of too late, so he pass away, too, in the same year.

CT: In the same year?

TC: In the same year, in 1976. It's over a year after the Khmer Rouge took over. And then I - when I was sick, I got one - I had to beg and beg them for good medicine, friends medicine or something like that. Finally I got one and I did not want to take it. I thought maybe if I got better, I could save for some other people in my family who will get very

sick, I can save that for them, you know. I kind of get a little bit better, but I could not keep it because I was sick again that I had to take it. So when I took that one medicine, I was completely well and I was so happy. It's like we don't have any good medicine, so it like worked so well after I took it. And then I stay in the village and went to work and come back home. My sister because she's older than me and she had, I don't know what you call -- what you call period, I don't.

CT: Period, yes.

TC: Yeah. Then she didn't have that because not enough food and all that. And then she was so sick and then one of her legs she could not walk, she walk with the stick, it's like she paralyze because of, you know, because of lack of food and all that. And she stay in the village. After she got better, they took her to other place and then she got sick, she came back and my younger sister they took her from -- away from my mom so she went to leave with her small -- with her teenage group.

CT: How old was she when they took her away?

TC: She's maybe 12 or something. And then like she had to work hard like carry like cow shit or something like that, you know, carry.

CT: Cow dung?

TC: Yeah. And all that on her head, and then she got so skinny, and during the night a lot of -- a lot of bugs, you know, like bed bug or some other kind of bugs that we could not sleep. I used to go to visit her once, tried to go to visit her and stay overnight with her. I could not sleep at all because of a lot of bed bugs and bites, bit me. That's why she got so skinny and she lost almost all her hair. And it was hard at that time.

CT: Did she stay away from the rest of you for very long? How long was she away from you?

TC: Yeah, she was in the group for several months, too, yeah. She didn't get to go back to my mom. And I remember when I was with my mom almost like the Vietnamese came, took over at that time. My mom got so sick that I didn't think she would live because she could not talk. She talk with no sound, she is that weak and I have to put my ear into her mouth to hear what she say. She got so sick and when the Vietnamese came in, I did not know what to do because she could hardly walk. And I even had to carry some pot and pan and stuff. How can I carry her? I was by myself. And then my younger sister came over from the camp and then I almost -- people in the village left except me and I did not dare to stay. I thought if I stay, the Khmer Rouge will come back and maybe get us or something like that. Some Khmer left because they knew the situation, they left just ahead of time. And it was so quiet and I did not want to stay but my mom she did not really want to leave because she wanted to wait for my older sister to come home. And we kept waiting and waiting and packing.

CT: Where was your older sister at this time?

TC: She was in the camp, too, away from home. And then we waited and waited and then I had to leave. I said we should go to the main street in case Pol Pot came back, you know, we might not be able to go. They might take us away. And then we all decide to go to the big street and stay there. And then I try to come home and stay a little bit, it's in the daytime, to wait for my sister so we won't separated. And finally my sister got home and she was so sick because she eat some kind of tiny animal, bug or something like that, and then she got like poison from that and she could not move. She tried to get home. She just lay down and couldn't get up, didn't want to get up, didn't want to move. And then I tried to go and find sugar, maybe it will help her to have strength. And then I got some sugar and let her eat a little bit, and she feel a little bit better and then I try to ask her to leave and try to help her to carry her stuff to the main street so we can be together and she just walk with a cane and try to hold her and all that. Then we went to the main street. We did not get to move either. People just keep moving forward and we had to stay there and wait and wait. And I have to wait for my mom. And then we tried to ask somebody who has have cows, cart, so my mom can ride on that. And we got one person very nice and let my mom sit on it. Then we move little by little.

CT: Where were you going?

TC: Then we thought that we would go back to our home town in Preik Hoe that we used to live before, but it was far away, but we just keep moving. And then when we got to Siem Reap City, big city, my mom was so sick that I had to take her to the hospital. They have the hospital at that time, and she stay in the hospital for awhile. And I went to find some rice in the field. At that time whoever can go and get some food, nobody own anything, no - not belong to anybody, and we go and get it. So my sister and I try to go, my younger sister and I tried to go and get some rice and go visit my mom, and my other sister just stay in the place on the street, no shelter or anything, stay from night to night for awhile until my mom got a little bit better. After several days we brought her back and then not for long they announce it somebody want to go to Phnom Penh, they will have the truck to pick you up, Vietnamese truck, you know, soldier pick us up with the Cambodian guys and all that. So we decided to get on the truck. Then they took us to Kampong Chhnang back to that place. Then they stop there. We have to stay overnight and then another truck bring us to Phnom Penh City at that time.

CT: What happened when you got to Phnom Penh City?

TC: We didn't - they truck did not really go there yet, so we stop in one place close to Phnom Penh City and they drop us there. Then we have to find our own way to get home. So my mom couldn't walk and my sister she is sick so we just stay there from night to night and my -- we met our relative, they got the cart and they just left us. And we stay, we stay until they come and pick us up again, another truck. So when we got there, we went to our relative in Chak Un Ray, it's called Phnom Penh City, and we stay with them for about several days. Then we decide to go to our home town and we did not have anything to carry with so we just wait until they found the cart and help us to get our

stuff. Then we went to our home town and there was only my house left because they say at that time Pol Pot live in that house, they put stuff in there, so fortunately we still have the home and all other houses, my other houses across the street, they destroy it and all other people's home, they just destroy it and they plant banana tree and all kind of stuff, except my house still there. So we decide to stay there. And there was no window or door or anything. And after we stay for one or two nights, there was fighting again. There was some maybe Khmer Rouge trying to get over to the bridge close to my house and put some bomb or something like that in that. There was fighting and I was afraid. I told my mom to stay in another place, maybe a mile or so they have some houses, our neighbor's home, village people, and in the daytime we can stay at home. My mom did not want to leave the home she said. Now I got to my home, if I die, I want to die in my home. So we didn't dare to leave her and we were so afraid during the night, no door, no window and we are afraid of ghosts because they say, you know, at that time, Pol Pot kill people and they just put the banana tree on top, you know, and the banana got so big and all that, and at night we were so afraid only us, four of us, and -- but my mom did not want to go away from home, so we had to stay and scared sleep, we pray, and scary. So when after the fighting that night, they send some Vietnamese soldier to stay in our home, they stay upstairs, we stay downstairs, so I feel a little bit safer I have somebody there. Then we stay there. And then we try to visit our village people and they brought us some rice and food because my mom was very good. She had a small business and she always help people, so they -- we were friendly and they remember us, they brought us food and all that. And we stay for awhile. And then they, people, children start school, we try to get some stuff from the city we owe them for it, and then we sell to the kids books and pens and all that. Then when we make some rice, we brought back to them. At that time we exchange with rice, no money. And we were scared, the Vietnam people, they got drunk, they drink wine and then they swear each other, sometimes they shot gun.

CT: People staying in your house?

TC: Yeah, the Vietnamese people, they argue.  
(Recess.)

TC: I always feel like I am the strongest in the family. I took care of everything, even during Khmer Rouge later before Vietnamese got in, I have to go and dig the ground and all that. I feel like where did I get this strength. I was so skinny, but I work very fast and I was so glad that I still have strength and I wasn't sick and I did a good job. And then I did fast job so I can go and find food after I finish with what they give me to do. And so when I went home, I still feel that, wow, I have a lot of strength, must be God's help me because my family is so weak. And then I always carry rice on my head to go about two miles to get some stuff back home to sell to the students and all that. And when there was not safe, we feel like it's not safe, so one of my mom's cousin went during Chinese New Year in February, 1980, he said that he will come here to the U.S., to the west, he said. And then my mom said what about me and my daughters? He said that if you want to come along, you can. And my mom thought maybe I want to stay because I don't have any sons, it should be okay, she said that to him and he said that if they don't have enough soldiers, even the ladies they would pick. Then my mom kind of scared and not want to go into the army or something like that, and plus we are afraid of the Vietnamese people,

you know, so we decide to leave with my mom's cousin. And when we left, we did not dare to let them know at all, we might get caught if we let the Vietnamese people know. So we left to Nong Samit camp. When I got to Nong Samit camp, it's so hard, no water, no shelter. Then we met a friend of my mom's, so we stay with her for awhile. Then it's so hard, I didn't know how to live because no place to take a bath and no place to stay and no water, we have to buy water and all that. Then my mom thought maybe we should go back. We left because we like to come here and at that time they did not take any more people. They ended like late 1979. They used to take the truck and pick people up from their camp to Khao I Dang legal camp. So when we came it was in February, 1980, it was a little bit late and then we thought maybe we should go back home. When we came and told them that we just wanted to come and look for a relative in Battambang, visit them or look for them. So maybe -- and then we thought maybe we can go back, you know, go back to our home. Then my mom kind of decide to go back and we all decide to go back. Then her friend said that they always try to get here and you want to go back. And she told us we should stay for awhile to see because it's hard to go back and forth across the forest, you know. And when we walk across the forest to that camp, we were so scared, but there were a whole bunch of people and it was lucky at that night. We were safe. We didn't meet any problem, any people who torture like other people. So we were safe. And then the next - after we stay for a while we didn't really want to stay. The next one night we decide to go back to Cambodia, and we try to find a cart, a cow cart so we can put stuff in, put my mom back. When we came, my mom got to stay on the cart, too, the cow's cart, too. And then they just said don't go back, stay with us. We let you stay in our place until you find something and you can go and find and do, buy and sell things in the market. So we decide to stay and we thought maybe if we go back it's not good, maybe Vietnamese might do something to us. And when we left, we sold all the thing and we gave all the thing away. So it's hard to start all over again. So we decide to stay and we got stuck in that camp for about two years. And a lot of fighting while we were there, maybe five, six times.

CT: What was the name of that camp?

TC: Nong Samit Camp like new camp, and we stay at that border camp and there was some fighting between Cambodian soldier, between one group to the other group, sometime Vietnamese, and sometime the soldier in the camp they fight each other, argue with each other. And at that time I was in the market sell some stuff to make a living. And each time we had to run away. Sometime we grab something, sometime we left. The thing we just have some money, then we start all over again, bought stuff from the Thai people and sold at the market to make a living a little bit. And we run many times, several times when we were there. Lucky we never get hurts from the gun, the bullets, or anything. And when I was escape, I saw somebody, you know, had gunshot the leg and all that, but we were so lucky. Then we did not dare to walk across the forest to Khao I Dang Camp because we all women, we were afraid, no men in the family, we're afraid that we got rape and all that, and my mom she so weak, so old to walk at night, and my mom's relative from Cambodia, they live in the camp. They younger, stronger, so they did not want my mom to come along because she is so weak they were afraid that we all might get caught, you know, during - walking in the forest. So they left and we stay there

and we did not dare to move, we did not dare to say that we tried to get to Khao I Dang Camp. If they knew they will torture us because they think that we try to leave the country and all that. So we just live there quietly and try to make a living each day and try to make friend with people who have men in the family so they can help to protect us during the night. Nobody come and bother us and all that. And then one day my mom met another friend who came from Cambodia but they have away to get to Khao I Dang. They have somebody who can bring them. So she left us. My mom said when you get there, please try to help us. So she send somebody to get us. We didn't dare to come we thought maybe it would not be safe, we didn't dare to trust anybody. Then she send a letter along with that guy and then my mom and sister, if you don't take a chance this time we might not be able to got anywhere. So we came with him and it was okay. He brought us to the camp safely. At that time it's Chinese New Year's again in February, so it was not -- I'm not sure if Chinese New Year or Cambodian New Year's, so it was quiet in the camp and they were having fun or something, nobody check or something, so we got to Khao I Dang.

CT: How long were you in Khao I Dang?

TC: It's only a few months. We met our relative. And when they had the name to come to the United States, my mom asked them to sponsor us along. So at that time they can do that, so we came along with them. We were lucky.

CT: Let me just ask you a couple questions about your time back before you got to Khao I Dang and before the other camp. Did you, when you and your family were in the camps back in Cambodia, did you witness, did you see any brutality or torture? Was that something that you ever saw?

TC: Like in the camp?

CT: Yes, by the Khmer Rouge.

TC: No, I didn't see any.

CT: Okay. The camp you got to before Khao I Dang, was that on the Thai/Cambodia border?

TC: Yeah, Thai/Cambodian border.

CT: Khao I Dang is the legal camp so you were always trying to get there?

TC: Yes, uh-huh.

CT: And what do you do here now Thaly?

TC: Now? When I got here I was so worried and concerned, I don't know what to do. I did not speak any English, I learn very little from the camp but when we stay in

Philippines, I learn a little bit, a few more months over there. So when I got here, I was concerned, I thought in my family I don't have any brother to depend any more, now I have to stand up, be independent and all that, so I went to school, they call adult school, Gorland School, for a few months and my first teacher in Minnesota tried to encourage me to speak, just speak to anybody on the street, on the bus and all that. So I remember what she say and I try so hard to speak so I can get better and better. Then I thought after a few months it was summer break, and then I decide to go to TVI vocational School to study some skill, maybe I can find job right away because I thought I don't want to stay on welfare too long, plus I never have any experience that I should make a living by myself, be independent, always my parents support us, that's how Cambodian culture. So when I came here, my mom cannot speak, how can she have some business to support me, so I have to do it. Then I decide to go to TVI to study a skill to get a job, and I studied general office.

CT: Where is TVI?

TC: The one on Marshall, vocational school, now they call it st. Paul College School, yeah. And so I study there for a little bit over a year and then I got a job from - one job after another until now.

CT: Okay. I just want to give you the opportunity, if there is anything else you want to say about your experiences in Cambodia during those years? Is there anything that you would like to say in conclusion to this?

TC: Yeah, it's very painful but I try to learn a lot from the painful experience and I try to make the best of my life to help other people. And I just went to Cambodia last month and I see things, it's not really safe and I was so concerned about Cambodia country. I hope that UN, you know, can help make it safe, and I am here trying to make the best. I try, I always try my best for everybody, no matter where I live.

CT: Okay. Thank you very much for coming and telling your story.