

TESTIMONY OF KHON KONG, on August 14, 1992, at the Cable Access Studio, St. Paul, Minnesota. The examination was conducted by Leigh Bristol-Kagen.

MS. BRISTOL-KAGEN: We are here this evening as part of the Khmer Archives Project of the Minnesota Lawyers Committee. It's Friday, August 14th 1992. I am Leigh Bristol-Kagen. I'm a social worker and a volunteer with the Minnesota Lawyers Committee. Here this evening is Khon Kong. Thank you for coming this evening. The first thing I'd like you to do is identify yourself. Who you are? What is your name and where are you living now?

MR. KHON KONG: My name Khon Kong. I am living at 138 Susan Avenue Vadnais Heights Minnesota 51627.

#### EXAMINATION

LBK: And with whom are you living? Who is in your family now? A I living with a new family. It seem like it's my girlfriend. We not legally married, but we stay together. It's a first house, we bought a house in Vadnais Heights a few years ago. And right now I am working with PIRC as a social worker.

LBK: Do you have any family members still in Cambodia?

KK: Yeah, I do have my two older sister in Cambodia right now. They are widowed. Husband passed away during Pol Pot regime.

LBK: Do you have any family members in camps in Thailand?

KK: No I do not have in the camp. Only in Cambodia.

LBK: Now I'm going to go back to Cambodia and ask you where you were living before 1975?

KK: Before 1975 I was in army. I was lieutenant in army. And infantry. With my family and my five children.

LBK: And where did you stay in Cambodia? Where were you located? Where did you live?

KK: It seems to me like my location is not very useful. Only my wife and my children they stay in the camp, you know, in the military camp. I usually on a mission around the country.

LBK: So they stayed in one place and you moved around because you were working in the army?

KK: Yeah.

LBK: So you did not live with your family at that time?

KK: Yeah, it seem like my family and I, did not stay together very long because of my mission. Sometimes one month come back home, one month gone something like that.

LBK: What about your parental family? Your mother and father, where did they live?

KK: I was born in the countryside with my family and my two sister and my mother was passed away after my newborn after me. So I didn't know really about my mother. So I lived with my father since I was one years old. My father was sending me to school only me, alone in my family did I have a chance to go to school until I finish high school in Cambodia in 1963, no 1961. In 1962 I was looking for a job, but until 1963 when I register in army.

LBK: And that's what you were doing in 1975?

KK: Yes. Since 1963 I was in the army, it seems like I go around, you know, in the country more than I stay with the family. It's a mission, something like that.

LBK: I'm going to ask you now to tell about your life when the Khmer Rouge came to power in April of 1975, and what happened at that time to you? Just tell it as it happened.

KK: When the Khmer Rouge win the war in 1975, I was alone so I cannot see my family during that time because I wasn't there. But I come back from the battle, and the camp was confiscate by the Khmer Rouge so I could not get in to get my family so I had to leave Phnom Penh alone, by myself. And nowhere to go. Just go what I can go during that time. Seems like once you afraid that the Khmer Rouge will know that I am a soldier or something like that, so I tried to go from one place to another place with out- it seem in my mind like there nowhere to go. Without any point or without any direction of where I want to go, it seem to me like that. When I get to north of capitol of Phnom Penh there was a center for the Khmer Rouge over there, they called me and they want me to stay in there and working with them as a farmer, and I stayed there for a couple month and working with them you know you know during day and night depend how, they ask me to do the job. They ask me a lot of question. What I am doing before or during the Lon Nol regime or Sihanouk regime. I keep lying to them that I was a farmer or like a person working with the – living like the cyclo, with the motorcycle. I keep lying with like I was running a motorcycle to get a passenger from one place to another place. For living something.

LBK: Excuse me, I just want to clarify. You told them that you had been a farmer and you came to the city and became a "cyclo" ? A driver in the city?

KK: Yeah. I keep lying to them. I stay there a couple of months. They say, the higher level person, they want to take all the people from capitol of Phnom Penh to another place, so they asking me to leave that place to another place by boat, during that time to north of Phnom Penh to a province in far in the north like Battambang Province. But during that time I was thinking that my life would be really dangerous because a lot of

people that was with me, they cry a lot when they see that they sent to another place because they think that maybe it was killing by Khmer Rouge. So they sent me to Battambang Province, so I was there in, I think around 1976, 1977. And they force me to work during day and night, they provide only a little food to eat. And one thing that we don't know what to do because it seem like the life very dangerous at that time. You cannot go anywhere. Everywhere you go there are like the secret agent of the Khmer Rouge. They follow you around and ask you a lot of questions.

LBK: What effect did this have on you at that time? How did you react to living this way?

KK: Well, it for me okay because myself about the countryside and the city, it seem like I experience enough enough. But one thing, my life is so scared, because it seem like everywhere you go maybe you are going to die because they are going to kill you. Because the Pol Pot, the communist soldier, they are try to threaten your life all around. You cannot do anything against them. One thing that it because you don't have anything in your life. No medicine, no food, no doctor. When you sick, you don't know where to go. It seem like your life not secure. You in this time always thinking that someday I will die.

LBK: It sounds dangerous because you're being threatened and also because you have no way to escape. It sounds as though you felt very trapped.

KK: One thing that I am afraid that they will know who I am. When they know they will kill me right away. That one point, we have to keep secret what my life was before.

LBK: During this time were there any particular experiences that you had that especially stand out for you?

KK: Yeah I do. One time they sent me to work in the rice field. During that time, when you work you feel tired you don't have enough food. And only one thing you can eat is grab off a leaf that you can eat in the jungle and boil it with a spoon of rice, one spoon of rice that they give to you, and eat with that. When the harvest season coming, they change me from that field to work with another place. It seem like, they send me to one place from another place to work with the children in the camp. Because during that time when they sent the family to work in the field, they keep the children in the camp, like to help someone. Like caretakers for the children. I was assigned to work with one of the ladies, she's a Khmer Rouge leader working in that place with a lot of children. I was a cart driver to carry the wood from the jungle for them to cook the food for the children. That food that they feed the children is I not enough for the children. The whole camp equal around four or five hundred children, in that camp. So the children were starving at that time, even me was the same thing. So the children was die everyday because for starving, sometime they sick, nowhere to go, no medicine to take care of them. Probably around 1977 or something, there are some family from the northeast that they live close to Vietnam border. What they call it, they consider those people relating to the Vietnamese. So they capture them and bring them to that region where I live and during

that time Pol Pot kill a lot of families from the northeast. And sometimes they kill the whole family with the children. One time, I seen I put my life and my identity away because I try to protect the children from happening when they took their family to kill. And they don't know because they say they take them to work somewhere far away from the place that I live. But I know that when they go they kill them right away. And so I tried to take their children to talk with the leader to say "don't let them go". Maybe you have the power to say to them that "can they stay" because when they go they realize they will kill them too. They are innocent so maybe not to let them to go. And during that time the leader of the Khmer Rouge they listen to me, and they keep the children with me. So their life seem like they are lucky when their family was gone.

LBK: They were lucky that you were there, because you asked to spare their life. How did you find a way to talk to the Khmer Rouge leader?

KK: Well, it seem like, when you stay together you know what everyone--because it seem to me like I try to protect them from what happening. Because during the night, I forget to tell you about during the night, because during that time it seem like everyone in the whole village seem like corruption. Because people run from another place to another place to find food to eat. Sometimes they stealing food from one place to another place. And the lady who stayed with me there, she's a Khmer Rouge leader, they afraid for their life will be dangerous too-so they ask me to protect here because I am only the man who stay in that place.

LBK: Excuse me, the Khmer Rouge leader woman, her life was in danger too?

KK: Yeah. Because a lot of people was starving, they do a lot of crazy things like, during the night. They can kill you, to get your food from you something for them. So they ask me to protect them, sometime during the night I have to stay, and they sleep and I get them in that place. And they seem like they trust me when I protect them from what's happening around them. So when I told them about the children they listen to me so they keep the children not to go with their family.

LBK: So these are people you already knew. (Discussion off the record.) As I listen to you tell me about what you did I think that you showed a great deal of courage. Did you feel courageous at the time?

KK: Yeah I do. I feel like anyway, I will die the same thing, so I have to talk.

LBK: You have to?

KK: I have to talk with them.

LBK: Since you might die anyway at least you could talk with them for the sake of the children?

KK: Yeah, for the children.

LBK: I also want to ask you, I'm interested that the children were still with their parents because often time the children were separated from their parents. But they had all come together from the eastern zone? Is that right?

KK: Yes they come together. When they get to that region they were separated. They would separate the children from the parents.

LBK: Is there anything else that you wanted to tell me about this experience that you had? With seeing the children come and daring to risk your life to try to save theirs? Anything else?

KK: It seem to me like the same thing you can see everyday. When you are there you can see that sometimes you will hear the people crying. Because their life was threatening by the Pol Pot soldiers. They kill them every night. You can hear the voice nearby that. And in the morning I can go look ~round by my camp they burying the corpse in the ground. You can see the blood around. Every night it seem like you feel frightening, because you hear the voice or people yelling or because the Pol Pot soldiers kill them. And they can say what they can say to them because there is no way they can stop the problem. No way to beg them not to kill, they really kill. Even the small children, they kill the same thing. I want to try to protect the children life, but it's lucky that they didn't find out who I am during that time. But it's lucky for me because it seem like it's something that changed right there. Later on the Vietnam--the North Vietnam soldier fight back the Khmer Rouge and at that time lucky for me to find a way around to get to the city and find a way to get out from the country.

LBK: That was a couple of years later, I think. Is that right?

KK: Yeah, a couple years later, 1978.

LBK: Do you want to tell us more about what happened after the Vietnamese came in? On how you got back to the city and what you did with the people you were with?

KK: My way, I had a two cart that carry the food and everything in there that carry by oxen. In that car I put some food in here and the children come along with me because I got some food in the cart and everything. And the way I'm going, we don't know where to go because we have to follow that direction. Like they tell you to go this direction, you can't go back through where you want to go. I was trying to find an excuse to talk to the Khmer Rouge leader because they wanted me to go through the jungle, far away, so nobody know where it is. But I say if we go over there, we don't have any water to drink. We need to find where we can get water to drink and we can cook the food for the children. So I tried to find it excuse, I say we might have to go back to the city. The city, during the Pol Pot regime, nobody stay there, only the communist regime, only the communist soldiers stay there. But after the Vietnamese get in, all the communist soldiers run through the jungle. So the city seem like quiet so only people try to get out from the jungle to find a way to go over there. From one time to another time I try to ask the

leader, say should we go by this way so we can find water to drink. That way I try to go. They listen to me, when they listen to me it seem like I have the chance to go back to the city during that time. When I get back to the city, they come along with me, because we all leave the Khmer Rouge leader, but I tried to take them too. Because during that time, a lot of people that they know who you are. If you kill people before, they will know, they will kill back. Some of the people from the northeast of Phnom Penh because they miss a lot of family, a lot of children, their family die because the Khmer Rouge kill them. They try to retaliate from them. The lady that was with me, I say you can come with me. Anything happen, I can talk to them. I told them that.

LBK: They were afraid of the revenge?

KK: Yeah. There are one family I know. He's a very cruel person, a very cruel man. He come along with me too. That family has member who get killed by another person. People take revenge. That person, he seem like a spy. A Khmer Rouge spy. They try to see him, like a person who used to work with the administration inside Cambodia before. Like with Lon Nol regime or with Sihanouk regime. And that guy, he come along with me. When I get on the way close to city, I say you can take one cart with your family because I cannot take you along with me. I cannot let you go along with me. I tell them, you can take one cart and go wherever you want to go.

LBK: It seems that you had helped to protect a great number of people.

KK: They cannot come with me during that time. So I left that city to go very far to the north to the Battambang Province. I will stay there a couple month and try to find a way to make a living there. During the night it seem so scared because there a lot of robbery during the night. It seem like nobody cannot protect anybody from happening. We don't have any money to spend to buy food or anything. Like people they have a cow or pig, something they want to sell, they can sell to get a piece of gold. Somebody can sell some necklace, some necklace or some diamond ring or something. They can sell that, or they can buy something with all those things. During the night when they know that you selling something during the day, they know that you sell a cow or something, they can come and rob you during that night. And people life are not safe. I myself, one time. But I escape from the house, they come so I live with another family. With that lady that she come along with me. And that lady and the mother and the children, come along and they get a lot of gold, but the gold I believe they get it from other people during, you know.

LBK: They stole it from other people?

KK: Yeah. But I wouldn't say anything, they try to hide everything from me. But I just keep quiet, I don't want to ask them a question or anything. But I stay with them one night and robbers come in the house, they were hiding in the bottom of the bed. The bed for making by the floor board, something very low so they cannot see me. And they keep asking where the guy going, where the guy going. I said, they leaving to their friends last evening. I keep asking for a few minutes, that they left, so I get out from the bottom of the bed. It still frightening to my life. The one time I try to talk to the village leader,

saying you stay for a long time, why don't find some way to protect your people living here. Why don't go down in the street to the police man or soldier that they get some gun. They can protect the people living there. But the village leader said no we don't have any gun available to protect people.

LBK: So there was no protection?

KK: Yeah. And when they say that-- I was trying to talk to the village leader I say. If the inside government cannot do anything for the people, why don't you ask to carry a group, like carry a guerilla group that they fighting for people? They fighting for the different people. If you know where they are, you can talk to them and they can help us all out. And when the lady got to talk to one guy, he's a young guy probably between 18 and 20 years old. They speak very good Cambodian, but they do it for Vietnamese spy. They came to stay with me in that village for two or three nights. The village seem quiet, no robbery anymore. And after later, they call the Vietnamese troops to come and caught the village leader to put him in jail. They say that village leader is a spy with the guerilla troops.

LBK: The guerilla troops, for whom were they fighting? What were their politics?

KK: The politics were to abide by (unintelligible), you know, Son Sann.

LBK: Ok, that's what I thought.

KK: When people lost country, they try to get together to all the people who want to get back the country from communists.

LBK: A lot of the danger continued after the Vietnamese came. I wanted to go back and ask you what did happen to your own family, we've talked about other families here?

KK: My family, I have no choice because it seem like something push me behind so I cannot go back to the camp.

LBK: Right. You mentioned that.

KK: I'm scared by the Khmer Rouge soldier. So their life, they have to go where they can go. So after-because I have no way to go anywhere. Because if I go my life is short, because they won't let you go anywhere. You can go but not very far, only four or five hundred feet from your place that you live is okay. But if you go for a mile or two miles from the place that you live...

LBK: How old were your children at that time?

KK: My children, the oldest one was twelve years old. Twelve, eleven and nine and one is six and one is five.

LBK: Did you see them again? Did you ever see them again?

KK: No.

LBK: Or your wife?

KK: After the Khmer Rouge get in, I try to searching for them. I try to ask a lot of fellow who know my family. They told me that your family are gone, they died. Because they saw that. They come to the same region where I lived, but it's not close to me. It seem a little far from me. And that region is a very dangerous region. Not enough food, and also they kill.

LBK: Which region was that?

KK: That in Battambang Province.

LBK: Oh, in Battambang. That was a very harsh one.

KK: But I still keep, even they told me that, I still keep asking a lot of people if maybe a chance to find them. If someone still alive, but nothing.

LBK: I'm sorry. How old were you then in 1975?

KK: I probably around 38 or 37.

LBK: I want to take a break. Is there anything else that you wanted to tell us about your life during Pol Pot times?

KK: Well, my life during Pol Pot times, it seem like, I just believe that I will die someday. My body is not like that, because it is so skinny, it seem like. If nothing can happen I will die probably around a week or two week. Because I was sick, very sick and we don't know what to do. But one time, I had a very high, very high fever because we don't have any medicine. I try to begging the lady who stay with me to ask them about the coconut juice, because coconut juice it seem like the medicine can cure something (unintelligible). And she gave me that, she gave me one of that so I can drink that. I feel better on during that time. After I drink a little of coconut juice. What I experience during Pol Pot regime, is I go through a lot of threatening. Because they beat me a lot when I was in rice farming, working in the field. Because something wrong with the plow or something, they say that maybe because I doing that on purpose to break that plow because I don't want it working. And they beat me.

LBK: Often?

KK: Yeah. I try, I fall down in the mud, I try but my body was sick. I try to get up and do the job again to plow the ground and we don't have any strong and we don't have any energy to handle the plow. In order to let the plow go around the field.



LBK: That was very cruel.

KK: But it was lucky that when the harvest season coming that they take me out from that field to another place else. That working with the children there. It seem to me like another chance that I can survive.

LBK: It wasn't as hard, physically, to work with the children?

KK: Yeah, it was not really hard like working the rice field.

LBK: Not as hard.

KK: Yeah.

LBK: And then you gave the children a chance to survive.

KK: Yeah.

LBK: Anything else that you want to talk about?

KK: Well, beside that it seem like you can see a lot of things that make you frightening. All around because when you see them kill other people, you feel like you might have the problem the same thing like them. So you're thinking that maybe they gonna kill me too.

LBK: I think that's what they wanted you to think.

KK: Yeah.

LBK: Anything else?

KK: Yeah, you can ask me a question. I don't remember all the thing that...

LBK: You remember very powerful things.

KK: I want to add a little thing about when I left Phnom Penh.

LBK: When you left Phnom Penh in 1975?

KK: Yeah, when I left Phnom Penh you can see that during that time we go. You can see that when I run from the battle because I told my soldiers that-I wasn't in battle during that time. We think the fighting will end very soon, so I try to influence in my troop that said you need to go back to the camp. Don't stay there. If you stay there, you and I will dying in here. So I told them to take all the gun and medicine back to the camp and put in the store and go home. And after my troop left, I was left behind them, the brigade commander they were searching for me because I left the base without informing them.

But whatever they searching for me, I still keep coming, get going, through the Phnom Penh because I was in the surrounding of Phnom Penh. I was getting to inside of Phnom Penh. And I just stayed one night with a friend. And in the morning I was thinking go to family and the Khmer Rouge were inside of Phnom Penh already. I woke up I saw the Khmer soldier, the communist soldier, everywhere. And I had no choice to get to my family, so they force people to get out from the capitol Phnom Penh during that time. And on the way I walked out from Phnom Penh I meet a lot of soldier. They still wear uniform. Their hands were, you know, tied up.

LBK: Behind them?

KK: Yeah, behind. And I was frightening, so frightening because I was the same with them. And I afraid to look at them. I keep walking, my face down. And probably four or five hundred soldier, their hands was tied up. And I keep walking and walking, worried that maybe they know who I am and they will caught me.

LBK: Very, very frightening, because you would have lost your life there. Thank you.

KK: Your welcome.

LBK: I'm going to change the subject a little bit if you're ready and ask you when you left Cambodia and where you went? Take your time.

KK: I know there was something wrong when I saw the Vietnamese soldier, he beat the guy that I know very well stayed with me during that night. That village to protect the people. I was sure that he's a real Cambodian, try to protect Cambodian people from happening, from all the robbers threatening their life. I don't know that he a spy or the Vietnamese so I say that I cannot stay inside Cambodia anymore. I have to go to the north, maybe I have a chance to do something for my country. To group people who desire to protect the people, to protect the country, like me to get together and fight back North Vietnamese soldiers in our country. So I will go to the Thai border, I think in 1979. But I get to the Thai border I meet a lot of guerilla troop over there. And people come back and forth because, some of them are regular, people get to buy something that they need, because there are a lot of products that came from Thailand. I stay there. I see that I want to do something. I want to do something for my country, but it seem like nothing that I can do because people seem like, cruel. They are cruel. They don't have any discipline that we can work on with. It seem like they grabbing what they want, they steal, they killing people. But during that time there a lot of rescue committee. They get their friend American, or other country. They try to search, to provide, some food to the people. So I am lucky, at that time, that I can survive with all those the food.

LBK: So if I understand you correctly, instead of being able to join with the guerillas and do something for your country, you went to a camp and received help there and were able to help out in the camp?

KK: Yeah, but I am stayed at the border a little longer too, around six or seven months at border. And not to decide to try to come right away and try looking for a way any pass border we can get group people together. But it no way we can do anything because they say maybe my life here on the risk again. So I say better not to do anything than get to the camp and try to apply to a certain country.

LBK: Right. Which camp did you go to then?

KK: I was in Khao I Dang camp.

LBK: And did you do anything while you were there in the camp?

KK: The first time when I group people in the camp-- I be trying, the first time I was there the group leader in the camp try to get a list of people and get food for them. Get food for them from UNHCR. And also try to learn more English, learn English in order to come to a certain country. I apply to different country. Not only United States, but to France, to England, to Canada, to Switzerland, to every country in the world. I try all of them where I can go. But the most is United States, I write a letter. A lot of letter. Maybe a hundred or something letter. And later on I work with Sanitation Project with International Refugee Committee in Khaw I Dang camp. And in 1981 I was moving from Khao I Dang camp to Srah Keo camp and I working in the Srah Keo camp with the Sanitation Project and as a Sanitation leader to teach the people how to protect from happening when the live too close together because the camp is so small. And around 30,000 people live in-supervised by UNHCR. And I go around with one American friend, his name is David Red. He live in New York. He's a sanitation engineer, and I work with him during that time. And have a class with the people to teach them how to clean the place because there a lot of flies in the camp. And we try to protect them from happenings with their life during living too close together.

LBK: And then when were you able to come out?

KK: In 1981 my name was called by JVA to do interview. I would pass a test right away and come to United States.

LBK: Did you come to Minnesota right away?

KK: No, the first time I was in Missouri, because my sponsor, he over there, he is a Cambodian. Right now he move to Texas. I was over there one or two years over there. I was thinking that I want to go into school the first time when I came to United States. But I couldn't find any school to do. Not to go to school because they have other education school, but it hard for me to learn because I had to listen to teacher. Other education you have to sit down and learn by yourself and read the book and anything that you understand. I say I cannot learn that way. I need to listen to teacher explain me all the words because maybe I need to understand the accents. The accents are what to sound, what to say the word and what it meaning. So I decide to go back, to go to work. So I work in a nursing home with elder people for two years. Get paid \$6.25 an hour and later

on I try looking for a better job to do. I get another job in a factory. They work with the car motors. They work in the fine motors. I get paid five dollars. After one year they put me on layoff and I decide to move up to Minnesota. Because I have a friend here. That one I give you the name. He live in the north of Burnsville right now. I try to call him, is there anything, any job in here in Minnesota. He said are you kidding me, I can help you to find a job. And I stay with him for a couple weeks and I go around finding a job. And I get a job in Bloomington. They made a plastic bag over there. They call it Polytech. They name of the company Polytech but right now they change that name. I work over there for three year. Three year in the Polytech factory. I get good pay over there. I get everything. Good but one thing that because my health problem I cannot stay working. Sometimes they change the shift from night to day, day to night. I say, I want to looking for another job. That can have time to go to school and that can also maybe my health problem...

LBK: What is your health problem?

KK: It seem like right now I couldn't find anything wrong. It seem like allergy with something that.

LBK: So you're sensitive to certain places?

KK: It seem like go on and off so I cannot do anything. Eat anything that, eating food I have to be careful about eating food. It some food I cannot have, pork I cannot eat that. So that my problem right now. I went to the doctor and they try to do the test and everything. I told them that I am allergic. They say, no you're not allergic. They test me and everything and they could not find anything wrong with me. I say what wrong? But then I try to find another job. I get job down at Mixon Corporation. They build battery, car battery. So I switch from over there, I get a job. But I went to work at the Mixon Corporation they testing every month to find about blood, maybe get poisoning in the body because working with lead, you know. Like lead battery plate or something. When they testing me, I get a poison in the blood. It never go down, never go down. Keep high, high up. So they put me on layoff. They told me that you cannot work in here anymore. I cannot keep you, your life very dangerous right now.

LBK: So is that when you left the factory work and found some work as a social worker?

KK: Yes. So I stay unemployment for a year. I went back to school, technical school. I was thinking of going to LPN field. I stayed one year in technical school, but it seemed to me like I not like it very much about that field. Because when I went to school, there a lot of women in that field more than the men.

LBK: Oh, I see.

KK: So I feel I stay in school, I the only man.

LBK: So you didn't feel as though you belonged there?

KK: And later on, Meng Krug call me to a meeting. He ask me a couple time before I decide to work with him because I was in school. But I feel I couldn't decide, yes should quit school to work, or should I stay in school. I couldn't decide, but I really need the money, because I could not stay in school too long because I need the money to support myself. So I-when he called me the third time I say, okay I decide to come to work with you.

LBK: And Meng Krug was head of the Refugee and Immigrant Resource Center?

KK: And he know me because I do during my school year a lot of volunteer work in the west side. I live, during that time, I live in the west side. I do a lot of volunteer work with the community so he know me. So he call me.

LBK: I want to ask you now what you would like to say about your life at this point? Thinking back to what your life was like in Cambodia during Pol Pot times. What do you feel is most important that you would like to say about what you lived through?

KK: When I was in the communist regime, I keep thinking in my mind, not do I have any chance to recover from what's happening to my life? I keep thinking that it seem like dream. It seem like my dream. My life, till I got all along, maybe someday will change. I keep dreaming about that. And after dreaming, it seem like something happening right away. The Vietnamese troop fighting back the Khmer Rouge and I have a chance to get out from country. It seem to me like my life is very lucky right now. I'm happy to stay in United States. You know?

LBK: I'm happy you're here too. So, at the time, it seemed like a dream, or I would say a nightmare. But you didn't know if it would end then.

KK: Yeah. I didn't know what. It seemed like a dream.

LBK: Does that mean that it seemed unreal in some ways?

KK: Yeah, it seem like unreal in some way.

LBK: But it was also very real?

KK: Yeah, but very, very real. Because it, by my decision, when something I feel, it seem like something come true to me.

LBK: Which decision, for example?

KK: From my experience it seem like when I do a lot of good thing for people, because during my--when I was young, when I was in army I do a lot of good thing. It seem like, my donation bring back my good thing, bring back my life. Because I fight a lot with the

enemies, during that time with the Khmer Rouge, with North Vietnamese troops before 1970. From 1970, and I do help a lot of people, because whenever I was holding a gun in my hand, but I never intended to kill people. That is a good thing that I feel like something, you know, something helping me.

LBK: Something what?

KK: It seem like God, or...

LBK: Something helped you?

KK: Yes, protect me from what happened.

LBK: Somehow. You're probably right.

KK: Yeah. It seem like something protect me from what happened.

LBK: I think we can make that as the conclusion unless you want to add something else.

KK: Yeah, I'm in United States right now, but I hoping that someday Cambodia will have peace and. maybe something change from what happening before. And maybe the United States can help them, you know, protect the Khmer can gain the power back so the whole country can have peace like the United States.

LBK: We wish for that too. Thank you very much.

Khmer Oral History Project  
Minnesota Historical Society