Several pages of the original transcription of the Testimony of Lar Munstock 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: 3; 4; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17;18;20;21;22;23;24;25;26;27;28;29;30;31;32;33;34;35;36;37;38.

TESTIMONY OF LAR MUNSTOCK, taken on the 10th day of August, 1994 (1992?), at the Cable Access Studio, St. Paul, Minnesota. The examination was conducted by Naomi Perman.

MS. PERMAN: I am Naomi Perman, a volunteer attorney with the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee. I am about to interview Lar Munstock for the Khmer Archives Project. It is Monday evening, August 10th, and we are at the St. Paul Cable Access Studio.

EXAMINATION BY MS. PERMAN:

NP: What is your name?

LM: My name is Lar Munstock.

NP: How old are you, Lar?

LM: I am 49 years old.

NP: Where do you live?

LM: I am living at 2915 Burnside Avenue, Eagan, Minnesota.

NP: How long have you lived in Minnesota?

LM: I will be in Minnesota for 11 years.

NP: Tell me where you were born.

LM: I was born in Svay Rieng Province in Cambodia.

NP: Where is that in Cambodia?

LM: It is along the border of Vietnamese area.

NP: Tell me where you were living in April of 1975.

LM: In April of 1975, I am living in Phnom Penh. I was a teacher.

NP: At the time, were you married?

LM: I was divorced.

NP: Did you have children?

LM: I have three children. A daughter eight years old, a second daughter seven years old, and a younger five years old.

NP: At the time were they living in Phnom Penh?

LM: They were living in Phnom Penh with their father.

NP: I would like you to think back to that day you told me when the Khmer Rouge came.

LM: I lived at Tuol Kork, Suburb of Phnom Penh. I was with two sisters and one cousin and another cousin. And on that day we saw people one day along the street and they said no more war. They said the war is over, there will be peace. And so - and then the people just from one want to know what was going on and then we saw solders come up. They come up and people went in different directions and later on, we saw the soldiers in black uniform and they say no more war. You go back home. We have peace from now on, no more war.

NP: You were saying that to the soldiers?

LM: The soldiers told us no more war. There will be peace for ever, and that's it. But still our people -- some people were around with the soldiers to celebrate peace and some feel like skeptical about, especially about I am not so sure so they try to collect the children and they take their children from their home, and then the soldiers to see what was going on and celebrate, that's it, and it happened like this for a few hours until like dawn, like around 6 o'clock. We were told that we had to leave the city. We had to leave the city. The American army come and drop the bomb anytime from now. They won't let us have peace, so prepare and get out of the home, and let's get out. We cannot live in our own home.

NP: Were you permitted to bring things with you?

LM: When they said - I don't understand. I did not know the people, the older ones that were skeptical. They said you should prepare. I say what prepare? I said why should we go, and like there is war in the suburban countryside, we are in the city, and now we are in the city and they said the place where you were born and so you cannot go in the city, so I had to –

NP: What time of the day was it when you left the city?

LM: The city, about late evening, getting dark. 7:30 or 8 o'clock maybe.

NP: How many people were in the group?

LM: The cousin had her family and she decide to go there but only four young women in the family.

NP: How many people were forced to - -

LM: But the whole - - the whole people in that area left home but the clothes that we got together from my apartment, the four of us.

NP: Were you all headed in the same direction?

LM: Yes, headed in the same direction. We join because we went to the national Road #1 Phnom Penh, Saigon City so we proceeded there. And when we go there, everybody got to that main road was full and packed with people and we can't hardly move. We just scared. And then we cannot walk. We just stand, we stood up, and when we got tired, we would sit down. For one night we just were like that.

NP: How many people were in this group with you? Would it be hundreds, thousands?

LM: We cannot count. It was just all packed. There was no empty spot at all, just able to put the foot on.

NP: Were you walking or standing?

LM: Standing and sometimes sitting down because we cannot move. We were packed.

NP: How long did you travel like that?

LM: For one night. On night. I get to the bridge that we cross, this bridge to proceed. The bridge we call Kbal Thnal. That is about like in the morning, so 4 o'clock we cross that bridge. I was hesitant to cross the bridge because I liked to proceed in the direction, toward the direction of where my ex-husband was born because I suspected that my exhusband may take my children to that direction but they won't let me go in that direction. They want me to cross the bridge and we have a group because far from that bridge and saw the fire, and we were forced to go, to be killed in the fire, because we see part of that city was on fire and then we got there and we were crossing slowly and at that one - there was not as crowded as when we were at the early night because the people were spread in to both sides of the street. When we were there early night, the Khmer Rouge forced us to take to the street. They don't let us go to that because alongside the street was housing and so forth, so we were packed but when we get far out of the city, a little bit far, they seem to allow us spread and it wasn't as crowded. I believe that a lot of people tried to rest outside of the street and I do not know. I received the order and then proceed my way and then when we saw the fire going, that maybe we were forced to move into the fire but somehow when the building collapse after we cross that so we were safe and then we were so tired and no we decide to take a rest. We saw people like lay down everywhere in one spot. Far away from those, we decide to take a rest and then we stay

there. My sister went to sleep and then somehow I feel--it was so quiet, I suspect something went wrong. Nobody moved. I didn't hear anybody breathe and then after a while, I woke my sister up and said we got to leave this place. We should not stay here. And then something wrong and then we left the place, proceed forward and then far away from then, we saw few people and feel more safe. I talked to my sister those people around us are still slept. I did notice there were no body move at all. I didn't hear anybody breath at all maybe we slept with the corpse, maybe, so my sister think so, too. But after that, it was clear like a warning but it is not real clear yet we met people. I said somewhere there we took a rest. And they say maybe you are right because of the war the people stay. A lot of people were killed and also in the fire and also in the war, and then they pull them out and display in some area like kind of spend the time with them, then night with them. Okay. And then from now, we met many people and we saw people and proceed on our way.

NP: Are you still in Phnom Penh at this point?

LM: No, I left out of Phnom Penh - - I cross the bridge and I was out in the suburbs.

NP: How long did it take for you to walk to the village of your birth?

LM: It took me - - it took us about a month because we did not proceed as fast. We were told that we do the farming and I know that Svay Rieng is a very poor province very dry, and we did not have enough food, so I decided that to get some area which the soil is richer and so we don't have a hard time to grow crops, and then I try to return and to get something to take other route but just somehow I was - - even when the Khmer Rouge asked me where do you want to go and asked me where I was born, and I told them the truth. So they said if you were born there, you should not go there. You cannot go to other direction, you have got to proceed your way to the place where you were born, so I had no choice.

NP: Were there always Khmer Rouge with you?

LM: Um?

NP: Were the Khmer Rouge always with you along this walk?

LM: The Khmer Rouge was like on patrol and we see - - when the first we moved forward and some people they just shot in the air, some just point like this above their eyes, above their head, and we were scared, I was scared, and just proceed. Somehow I heard that they threat some man, you were soldier someway just mean voice and gun point so I try to avoid to see that scene and just proceeded and after I heard the gun shot behind me, make me discourage to ask them a question where I should go, just to avoid them. When we see the Khmer Rouge soldiers, we try to get away from them.

NP: Were there a lot of people on the road, people from... and returning to their home villages?

LM: Not all of them return to their home village. Only some people with us. Someday somehow they lie, they did not tell them the truth where they were born and try to move to a different direction and finally, I know this, that they forced us to go to where we were born so we cannot have our backgound. The point is to identify who we are and they make - - they kill the educator people, the people in the city, so if we go - - people who went to different places where they did not know who they were, they can't like their background so that's it, so the idea of the whole plan was to force people to go to where they were born so they cannot hide their background.

NP: What happened when you returned to your village?

LM: When I get there, they did not allow me to go to the home. They put us in a camp and then they asked for name and background and so forth, and that's my place so everybody know me, who I was, so as I was a high school teacher in and they know that so many, I don't know, hundreds of people get up in court of the people and then 13 of them, 12 are men and I was the only woman in that group and we - - we had to go to the education camp, the education camp.

NP: Did they tell you you were going to an education camp?

LM: Yes, they did because we are educated, we were indoctrinated by the government so we should go to get our education. We belong to Anka. And I saw people and something did not look good to me, the thing did not look good for me, but I tried to support my sister. Don't worry. I will be all right. So I tried to control myself and so that I was born there and I will be all right in the morning so at that was one o'clock in the afternoon. So they just say 13 of you walk to that direction. They point to that direction. You walk about two hours or so and then you get one temple or one village that day.

NP: You walked on your own?

LM: We walked with 13 to that place. Then when we get to that place, they say this is 12 men and I am the only woman, I should go to another camp so they point out the direction, so I walk alone to another camp. The sun in summer is hot sun. It is hot sun and I'm barefoot and I proceed my way to another camp. When I get there, I didn't hear the Anka, just see the building, and then I saw one young man approach me while I was waiting and he asked me how do you get here, how I get there, and I told him, and I was sent over here and he asked me what did you do. I said - - I told him because my title was a professor. I was a professor. And he said, oh, too bad, you shouldn't tell them so, the Khmer Rouge do not have record. They don't have any papers. You should lie. You know what, the simple element is good teacher, bad positioning. They have to work very hard. You know, the camp not far from here. The elementary teacher, the elementary school teacher, and simple civil servant were there and they were forced to work hard. Just on month in the camp, we hardly recognize them. They are skin and bones, and their legs and their knees. And he said you should not tell him. There is no way I can lie. Everybody will know me so it will be even worse if they know me if I lie, so I can't.

Somehow after a while that man just left and then the Khmer Rouge came and asked me and fortunately say you came to the wrong place. You came for over there. They point out another camp. So I proceed my way to another camp and it was late afternoon I entered the camp site and then I saw a lot of school girls, school boys there. It is old temple. I don't know the name of it now, and that was it, and I know that after walking on the hot sand, the path was full of sand, my big toe nail become black and dropped off a few minutes later. Yes.

NP: So you arrived at the camp without the children?

LM: No, I am alone but - - I was alone but a lot of school kids, school girls, those students. The students and teachers were placed in one camp.

NP: What happened at the camp? What was your schedule there?

LM: We worked at the camp. We worked hard, we get the soil and carry it to like ponds because it is dry season, nobody could grow crops. Sometime we - - we were divided into two groups. Some group went to look for firewood to cook and some had to work hard in the field. In..., there is no word for why, there is no - - it is like plain, no foliage. We cannot find trees. We couldn't find firewood. So we went into the, what you how you call, bamboo forest and we went to look for firewood, but just bamboo, and there is no life so the bamboo with thorn and we try our best when we see a death branch to just cut it and so we can make, so one small branch like this (indicating) and but most of the time, I make up the soil, pick up the soil, make canal, pond. And we were not allowed to talk and just there - - and some of the students say we visit. We are not prisoner we just educate you the new doctrine of the Anka. You are employed but the students, you teacher - - they call me teacher - - you are so naive. You are not an equal, you are our prisoner, you see. During working day we are not allowed to talk because we are prisoners and a lot of students complain and say if you complain, you will be put to death and so try to work in quiet.

NP: Did you work every day?

LM: We work every day and then the food was short and they start to reduce in the beginning. You were just ... by yourself. Before there is some vegetable and finally, it was dry, there was no vegetable, so it is dry and then salt, dry and salt, and then after awhile, there is only juice. And a lot of students, especially men, get sick. I don't know how. The boy get sick - - more boy get sick than girl.

NP: Did they die?

LM: We stay in the camp together for a while and I helped the students when they get sick and I took care of some of them somehow. For awhile, they split, not allow the women and the men to be in the same camp. It is like a camper, different buildings, two buildings for the men and two buildings for the women but in the same temple. The Anka split to get the women to another place and the men so we lost the other men and that

place where we went to, it is located in the one house. As in Cambodia, the houses were built above ground and you know what, for the house, we were - - like at night, we slept like in row, head touch head, toe touch tow, so the floor was covered with people. You can't even move. So what we do, with just a few clothes we wrapped and put these up here (indicating). But all we got as belongings, one plate, one spoon, and a few clothes we wrap up at night just a pillow, and it was dry, not enough water in the building and if one get lice, it spread to you.

NP: How did the Khmer Rouge try to re-educate you at this camp?

LM: After working they tell that the Anka liberate our people from the U.S. imperialists. There is a bad thing about the United States who initiate war, like use war as - - like much in a war. The United States create war so they make business. United States imperialists, colonialists, very ambitious. They colonize other countries and the Anka liberated us from the imperialist, American imperialists.

NP: Who is Anka?

LM: The Khmer Rouge. (there is discussion)

NP: You mentioned Anka several times. Could you tell me what Anka is, who it is?

LM: Anka literally means organization. That's Anka, the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge.

NP: At the camp, were you indoctrinated every night?

LM: Every night - - we had something to do every night. After working we come to have meal and then they like interview one by one, ask about all the biography. We fill out formes and so forth that ask who we are and then - - so along with the biography, there are so - - they ask some question to reflect our attitude toward the Khmer Rouge and also the biography. So every night either indoctrinate, indoctrination about the Khmer Rouge, about China, about the Soviet Union, about the Communist world, how the Communist world, how the Communist world, how good it is and how bad the United States, and the role of Anka, the Khmer Rouge, try to liberate us from the bad U.S. imperialists and tell of the communist regime, the philosophy of the Communist people, and they view that in the future, the Communists will rule the world and the United States will be nothing. That what we were trained to believe.

NP: How did you feel about these sessions? Were they frightening?

LM: Somehow I adjusted well. I understood the situation because I was the highest among those, and the attitude that I view as against the Khmer Rouge, I will be the first one to take away so I try to recall what I learned at school to write composition, a composition so I put like a case from the other side to make believe that the Khmer

Rouge is good, accept the Khmer Rouge philosophy, and the world is against them. It causes life. So I put it in my mind and try to live the way I live ...

NP: How many people were at the camp at the same time as you?

LM: Let's see. We were at different camps. At that time, we were just among women. Let's see.

NP: Educated women?

LM: Student and educated women. Let's see. I believe 16 women.

NP: During the period of time you were at the camp, did all the women stay at the camp? Did they all survive?

LM: We don't know. I don't know. You know one day –I recall one day that when we spread and then the Khmer Rouge said that there is a ceremony. There would be a show so they have all the prisoners in the room together to watch the show. The show was performed by the Khmer Rouge. You may see things in someway, the Communist way, and praise Communist party and so forth. Somehow I feel that we are left – - when we went to watch the show, we were informed that we had no right to talk to each other. On the way to watch the show, we saw the typical men that use to be together at the same camp because we cross each other. I heard the words -- all the women are crying, weeping, and I didn't know what was going on, and they cried, they weep and cry, and I know that the men finally know that the boy and the girl had been in the camp, they are classmates, some of them are brothers, they are good friends, and when we were forced to live like – miserably with each other and when we were at the show, we were forbidden to talk, so they cry when we watch the show.

NP: What was the show?

LM: About Anka. It was something about Anka, about working in the farm, enjoy working in the farm. How long were you at this re-education camp? I was -- very fortunate to me, I stayed at the camp only about two months. Somehow my ex-husband managed to bring the children to me because he told the people over there that he did not hope that he survive because he was there in another area. He was forced to work hard and poor food – shortly before, it was short time and then he felt like he may not survive so he asked to bring the children to me, so he joined my place, but I did not have a chance to see him but then informed that he's around, and then the Anka send me back to village to watch the kids and then took my husband away from the camp.

NP: So your husband brought your three children to the re-education camp?

LM: No, to my village.

NP: To your home village?

LM: Yes, to my home village, um-um. And the Khmer Rouge and my relations bring me back to the village. They release me.

NP: Did they know that your children were there?

LM: Yes, they know that, they informed - - the Anka informed that my children were at the village, and I had good credit, too. They said how about me, I am a hard worker for the longer duration, and they train fast or something and there was no sign against the Khmer Rouge so that I could return to the home village.

NP: Was the home village near the re-education camp?

LM: Not, it is not very near. It take like - - bicycle - - two to three hours bicycling.

NP: You never saw your husband again?

LM: No. We saw him. When I came to the village, work in the village, he was - - in very bad shape and he was ... I heard that they say he's not going to survive. They release him to die in the village but somehow he did not die. I help him a lot, took good care of him because we needed to take care of the children.

NP: So he --

LM: He survived, too.

NP: He stayed with you?

LM: Um-um, until- - I said up until- - let's see. We work and then we - - he was released sometime, I don't recall, because he was in poor shape, and I don't know what is going on but they say him not survive because of poor condition but somehow he did, and we live in my home village, working there, um-um.

NP: Did you live with your children and your ex-husband in your home village until the Khmer left?

LM: No. We around October 1988.

NP: '78?

LM: Or '78, we were sent to Pursat. We did not know but later, we know that we were scheduled to be put to death at Pursat Province.

NP: All of you?

LM: Yes, all of us along with 150 people from that area. We know that at the time there was a coup attempt by another group and then led by the people at the eastern part, and it happened that my village is the eastern part of the country, so we don't know this from any of the Khmer Rouge, the people in that area should be punished in some way, so we were sent to Pursat October of '78 to be killed.

NP: What happened iu Pursat?

LM: At Pursat - - we travel long trip to Pursat. When we get there, we were divided into -- spread into different place but I don't know - we could say -Christians say may God help me or what, I don't know. We were assigned to live in one small hut but that there was one woman living there. When I got to that hut, it was dark and that woman carried her belongings away because the Anka say she had to move so when she left, she looked at me and she said don't tell them that you are from the city. Don't tell them that you are educated. Tell them that you are old people because the old people and new people - just tell them that; otherwise, you will be in deep trouble and they kill you. She told me that. It is just by coincidence or something and I don't know that - -let's see. Their vocabulary was different from us. I did not understand the words and I forgot already and I say what is that. Don't tell them who we are, and then - - so we try to find out what that work mean and then try to tell them we are old people, not new one, and as I was a teacher, I did not know how to do the farming or the planting the rice, and my skin did not look like those. Just what to do, I make up my little story. I said I was in the countryside and selling food or something to do with the countryside people. I did not know. I know my ex-husband look like a Chinese and just do something small, business to the poor people in the countryside. And he tested, my ex-husband, and he leave there and he is like were you raising the chicken, the chicken man? They do some process plus and they make them like undress them.

NP: Take the feathers off?

LM: No, not take the feathers, take the male organ out. And so then they castrate okay. He pass it - - he passed my husband to do so. he came home and he said how do you do that and I said I did not really know but I saw people do such and such so he did and luckily, he did it so we were so excited. He was saved and I did well. Live like the Chinese in the countryside so they assign me to raise the chicken, the chicken, and feed the pigs and the children were taken away to work on that.

NP: The children were not allowed to work with you?

LM: No. They take the children away to live with their - - the children group.

NP: When you left your home village to go to Pursat –

LM: Um-um.

NP: - - you said it was because you were - - in fact you were to be killed there?

LM: We were assigned to be killed at Pursat.

NP: And nothing happened in Pursat?

LM: They kept killing - - I heard that they killed every day, every night, but it happened that I was at the end of the list and from what I know, they kill whoever complain, whoever did not do a good job. There are people who did not understand the strategy. There were a lot of people who were very strong and work very hard but got killed. I saw the strategy. They force us to work - - if we work like to dig canal carry the soil the dirt. The strong people, they get a lot, but after they have been working hard, they took a break and when the Anka come and saw them take a break. They thought this person is lazy so they took them away and kill. And to me, I keep working consistently morning to night and then every time they come to see me, I just keep working, working, regularly, so that's the way. I did not accomplish as much as those other who did but I kept working constantly and I did not complain. And one thing, there is no plus they believe that I was a countryside woman, a poor woman living in the countryside, and so nothing seemed danger to them.

NP: You mentioned that when you were in Pursat and you were working in the fields that people would be taken away someplace?

LM: Oh, that in "Bopear", that in "Bopear", in my home village.

NP: That was before you went to Pursat?

LM: Before I went to Pursat.

NP: Tell us about "Bopear".

LM: I do not know what was going on but somehow in some period of time, they pick up people. One time in "Bopear" the Khmer solodier in black uniform sometime ever work inside, sometime at the place where we eat, and then they came to us at gun point after somebody they were scheduled to pick up, sit down and then they sit down and put their hand in back and tie them and take them away, force them to run before the bicycle. The Khmer soldiers rode the bicycle and so those were forced to run before the bicycle. And so anytime when we were working, we were working and when the soldiers or all the soldiers came, and then we scared to death. We did not know who they would pick up and then we just whispered. We cannot stand and look at them. We just work hard, try to ignore, and when we carry the dirt, we whisper did you see the soldiers, with the black uniforms. Yes. Did they pass us yet? No. We did not look at them and just try to work and whoever ended up saying okay they pass our sight. Good. So it was that and once in a while, we were scared to death, and we did not know what going on. And then later on, they said they schedule to kill all the soldiers. First they kill up the high functionally, the officers. Now no more of those. They will kill all the soldiers, even the simple soldiers. They were killed. And then after the soldiers will be teachers turn. Okay. I was teacher. I

get killed too, professor. You can't believe such fear. And I recall that my mother was there too, and she has a son-in-law who was a soldier. My brother was teacher, I was teacher. My mom was hard at that time. Luckily, it was not that one. After soldiers, it turned out to be - - after soldiers it turned out to be the soldiers of family, their wife and their children.

NP: They were killed?

LM: They were killed. And then not in my village yet, the neighborhood, they picked up the wife and the children, all the soldiers' wives and the children. They take them away. One of my sisters was soldier's wife. They just look at each other. After the soldier's family, it was teachers. That's it. But just before my sister was picked up, we were scheduled to go to Pursat so we were safe at that point.

NP: Her husband was - -

LM: Her husband was picked up long ago.

NP: How long were you in Pursat?

LM: I went to Pursat after October '78, until May '79. Phnom Penh was liberated January of '79 but at Pursat, at that time, January to April and May of '79, that was at the time that they kill the - - they kill most of the people. They kept killing and killing. We were moved from the village to the jungle. They said - - we were not - - we did not - something happened. They did not even know that Phnom Penh was liberated, we did not know, and then we were forced to move to the village. They said there will be fighting somewhere around the village so they moved us to the jungle. That is when I first met one of my daughters. When we were moved to the jungle, after - - the day after we start to work, they call a meeting, big meeting, all the parents, adults, and children got together to listen to the Anka, the Khmer Rouge to update what they are doing and so forth, and then I saw one of my daughters. She was skinny. I hardly recognized her, and then I approached her, and her hair was long and I saw lice hanging almost all over every single hair, and she hardly spoke. Her voice was very soft, and she didn't - - we didn't talk so much. I said "where did you stay?" She say - - she point out where she stayed. I said I was not very far from you. I said after the meeting, come to my place. She told me to ask her leader, the soldiers, her guard. As her mother, I went to ask her. And she say a lot of mean words - - no, please, I guess I like to clean up her hair or She said very rude to me. Okay. But I didn't see my daughter. Tomorrow when I went to work, I saw the group of kids across my work site, walk across my work site. I tried to find my daughter. I didn't see her. At noon, I come back to the place. I tried to find her. I didn't see her for a few days. I asked her friend, please find her if my daughter is among those. She said even if she did, we couldn't recognize her and then look back for the other side, to go to her camp. During that time, when I went and the guard say that he assigned - - she is sick and she is not able to go to work with the other kids. She stay in the camp but she assigned to do some light duty by the camp and she would be back soon, and then I wait for her. And I told her if you try to go to my place during break time so I can help, I may have some

food for her and some medicine for her. At that time they start to work. I am ready to leave and the soldier said - - talking to his boss, "she ready to leave" and he just said I should stay with the kid over there and I try to say nice word to them, to what is plan, talk about his plan, and everything that he say that the other did not say. The camp leader say about his plan. I said yes, you have great idea and so forth, and his plan to make pond and raise fish and I say very good idea, and he say that if I like to stay here, he wouldn't mind if I work her for the momma - - for the children, and or for our Anka, so somehow they force men - - they did not keep me and then after a while, when my daughter join me, they say that it doesn't matter who went into the children camp, they wouldn't allow them to get back, but somehow, they let me.

NP: So you were in the jungle, Phnom Penh has been liberated, and you have managed to bring your daughter from the children's camp to where you are living to bring her back to health?

LM: No. that was just one time we met since we have been to Pursat. We were separated and then the Khmer Rouge forced us to go to the jungle and then the first time I met my daughter and she was in poor shape, so the next day she managed to go to my - - where I stay, to my camp during break time, so I save some food for her and I have some - - somehow I have some like aspirin left and I have her hair cut and combed and help her an then when she is better, so I save some food for her and the people, the soldiers who guard my place, the soldiers say that feed yourself so you've strength to work rather than save food for daughter, so I save for her and help her. She get better. She get better, grow a lot there for a new days, about a week. She went in her camp but we were not very far from each other so during the break time, she went to my place and I save some food for her, so I was able to help her, bring back to better health.

NP: How old was she at the time?

LM: She was eight or nine years old, sometime like that.

NP: Do you know where the other children were?

LM: No, the other - - I did not have a chance to see them. They were in different camp and my other son, I didn't see him either so maybe it just somehow may be luck that I rescue the one who was sick. And then about two weeks or 10 days, there was fighting somewhere and then we forced to move again to the deep jungle and then boom, we didn't see each other again. We just worry and even in the jungle, we were forced to work and make the ground - - what do you call it, make us work, carry the dirt all the time and then at some point - - they kept still - - even after April, they kept - -forced us to move to a deeper jungle. I thought maybe the Vietnamese troops got very near somehow and to the point that we somehow you can taste - - over there in Phnom Penh there was something not like us right here, just heard something went on but we did not know and to the point that they were not able to stay every day. They want to escape. And then we try to get out of them, out of the Khmer Rouge because they were not - - they were not

able to go to village. They are afraid maybe the Vietnamese troop over there or what, but we don't know but we try to get away from them.

NP: Try to get away from - -

LM: From the Khmer Rouge soldiers, or leaders. At one point - - there were people from the deep jungle run out of the jungle, too, and so the Khmer Rouge just left them and I saw - - I went to talk to people around. Did you see my daughter? Did you see my children? And they said yes, they were there and some people said if you could not find her, she will not survive. She was in poor shape and try to find her; otherwise, we don't think she survive. That is what they said. So I went to different place to find my daughter, my children. At one point, they say right now my mother has all my children.

NP: Who did you hear that from?

LM: The people who know us say my mother and my children, they are together, so it was a big relief. And then we just ask in what direction, where did you see them last and what direction, so we try to go in that direction to get my children. Finally, we found them and get back to the city, to the road, to the main road. May 20th '79, we join the main road.

NP: Were there a lot of people on the road going back to the city?

LM: lot. To the city, and some people, we look for food because we did not have food so either travel to the city or to where they want to and to get food, so we went to find food. And we saw a lot of corpse, dead people, around and when we come back, they said did you cross that field? I say no. What field? They said there is one field full of people, dead people, injured and so forth. I said what went on? I didn't say - - I said I did not. They say they did, and they saw a lot of people dying. They said the Khmer Rouge called a meeting and they said "Come to the meeting" and they said over there. And then when the people did, they just throw them and then kill those people. That's what they ask me, if I saw that, but I didn't see.

NP: This was on the way back to Phnom Penh?

LM: No, on the way back the main road. I decide not to go to Phnom Penh. At the main road, I saw the Vietnamese soldiers. I was scared. I did not know what to do, in what direction was my daughter, and I just say hey, what direction should I go. And I stopped and they just wave me, come, and I did not understand. I don't know the visit Vietnamese word, so I stop and wait for the people around me. Should we go to enemy soldiers over there? Just go and stay over there, and then we join and he say stay there, don't go very far to the main road, and I decide not to go to Phnom Penh. I decide to go to Thailand. We come this other way so we should not go back to Phnom Penh. I went and I got to Thailand border June 6th.

NP: You walked there?

LM: Yes, we walked, find somebody to walk with for one week - - no or two, no. Maybe June 6, 7, 8, 9. The Thai government decide to push the refugee back and buses took us back to hill cliff and dump us thousands, many thousands of refugees through that big hill cliff and then I walk across mine field back to Cambodia, and many people die. It is nightmare. I just couldn't imagine how people could do this to us as refugee. Surviving Pol Pot more than four years. Escape to Thailand, stay there a week and then they dump us back and when we get there, they say go in the jungle, you know, for no water and no way down to cross the Prah Vihear cliff, full of mines after that, mines in the field. No matters my goodness - - and at some point, we follow the foot step - - I can see the picture of the people who went ahead of us. The mine explode and killed. We were next. We jump over the dead body and proceed away. I say is it possible? Is it unbelievable, life in the Pol Pot regime and no, they can't do this to us. I just see myself like - - we cross, we said across the sea and this boat was sinking and we swim across the sea and get to the shore and then people push us back in the sea. That is what I see, and I try and I survive.

NP: How did you finally escape?

LM: I went to Pursat and then I found my former teacher was the governor of Pursat. I find my friend who was a minister in the current government. He said what is going on? So I went to Phnom Penh and then I was sent to political school, study for three months and then back to be teacher. A few months later in November I escaped again. You know, there will be a settlement in the third country and so forth so we escape again. We left Phnom Penh.

NP: To?

LM: To Khao Dang camp.

NP: A refugee camp?

LM: Yes.

NP: How did you get there?

LM: Oh, a long story. We escape with the truck from Phnom Penh to Battambang and somehow at the time we escape with the important people. We were important. My exhusband was important. Other people were important. And when they check the truck, we try to get out and the people - - one person escape with us, too white so he put dirt and charcoal on the face to make it darker and we were scared but just try, and then we walk to Chumroomthmai and I stay at Chumroomthmai for a short day because I spoke some English and I met some American, I told him my story and one thing, I use to work for the U.S. embassy during '75, before the country collapsed in '74, so they help me and bring me to Khao Dang camp.

NP: Your children and your ex-husband, too?

LM: Yes.

NP: How long were you there?

LM: Not very long. Less than one year and we were sent to Lumpenee, Bangkok and somewhere else and then we finally resettle in the United States.

NP: All of you did?

LM: Yes.

NP: You settled to Minnesota?

LM: No, Eugene Oregon, a very small village, and my sponsor, Miss Laura Grad. It is a small village and didn't think we could find a job or something to do and then I stay for a short time and I told my ex-husband we cannot live there and we should go to California, we have friend over there, and maybe we can live together. We cannot, so I proceed and come to Minnesota and he stay in California with the children.

NP: He stayed with the children in California?

LM: Um-um.

NP: Do you think a lot about your life in Pursat, your dreams? Does it come back to you?

LM: Right now, not very. Before, just sometime and middle of the night, I scream, and my husband woke me and he said oh, somehow that I was in Pol Pot and try to escape and so forth. Somehow I dream that I went back and got caught with Pol Pot regime again, and then I just went there. In the dream I said I was in the United States and why decide I come back here again and get trap again and try to escape.

NP: Do you still have family in Cambodia?

LM: Yes, I have my big brother in Cambodia, one big sister, one younger sister in Cambodia. My younger brother just die last year because of natural death. He sick. My mother died two years ago. My father was missing since the day the country collapsed. We did not know where. We did not see him.

NP: How is your family doing now with the new government?

LM: They are poor. They are all right but poor. They ask me for support. I send some money but not much because I think they have to learn to survive. Sometimes I was angry and think that why they don't try to escape. I risk my life and escape twice and why didn't they escape and rely on me so somehow I just ignore.

NP: Thank you very much for telling us your story.

LM: You are welcome.

