Several pages of the original transcription of the Testimony of Y Nor 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: 11; 18; 20.

TESTIMONY OF Y NOR, on August 10, 1992, at the Cable Access Studio, St. Paul, Minnesota. The testimony of Y Nor was interpreted by Mr. Sothea Phea Poch. The examination was conducted by Mr. Steve Smith.

MR. SMITH: Hello. Today is August 10th, 1992. My name is Steve Smith and I am a volunteer lawyer/interviewer for the Khmer Archive Project which is organized by the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee. I am here today interviewing Y Nor. The interpreter will be Sothea Poch and we are present today at the St. Paul Cable Access. I'm looking allover the place; I can tell. Can I do that again?

VOICE: No.

SS: Y Nor, are you presently married?

YN: Yes, I am married.

SS: And what is your wife's name?

YN: My wife's name is Own Hang (phonetic).

SS: Do you have any children?

YN: Yes. I have eight children, but four of them die and four of them left alive.

SS: The children that died, was that in your country?

YN: Yes. My four children die during the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Two of them were killed by the Khmer Rouge and the other two died by starvation.

SS: How long have you been in the United States?

YN: I have been in United States for 12 years.

SS: The four children that you have living here, were they born in the United States?

YN: They were born in Cambodia.

SS: Other than your four children and your wife, do you have any other relatives here?

YN: I have my sister-in-law and her children.

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

YN: I have my nephew and nieces in Cambodia.

SS: And are they interested in coming to the United States?

YN: No, they're not interested at this time.

SS: Where was your home in Cambodia?

YN: My home is in the city, in the capital city, Phnom Penh.

SS: Can you tell me what your ethnic origin is?

YN: I am Khmer.

SS: Can you describe for me the conditions that you lived through under the Khmer regime?

YN: When the Khmer took over I was evacuated to -I was evacuated to Takeo Province and then was sent to Battambang Province. When I got to Battambang Province I was really sick and two of my children were separated and the other three were with me.

SS: The children that were separated from you, have - - were those the children that were killed?

YN: Yes. They all are my sons and they were killed.

SS: When you lived at the second camp that they transferred you to, what was it like living there?

YN: The condition was really bad when I lived in Battambang Province. There was not enough food to eat and I become really ill, and my two daughters also really sick because we don't have enough food to eat. They put in a big pot and there's only one can of rice for us to eat. And I was sent to the hospital, and was not enough medicine to cure my two daughters, was had a really bad infection on their feet. And I also had a really bad infections. There was not enough medication.

SS: What did the infection come from?

YN: The infection caused because of we don't have enough to eat and we don't have any strength or lack of salt. We don't have sodium in our body. When we go on the field if we get cut a little bit it make, enlarge the infections, become more serious.

SS: What type of work did you have to do in the camp?

YN: The job they gave me to do before I become ill, I was forced to dig in the canals and making a dam. Then after I became ill I was forced to take care of the cattle.

(Brief interruption.)

SS: Y Nor, I'd like to go back to some of the things that you mentioned earlier. You mentioned that you lived in Phnom Penh at the time of the occupation by Khmer Rouge. Do you recall what date that was?

YN: April 17, 1975. That's the date the Khmer Rouge took over and came to Phnom Penh City, and they came for one day. They evacuate people where my family was forced out of the city to live in a suburb for about one night. And then the next day my family and everyone else was forced away from the city. We walk about a month, took us, to get to Takeo Province.

SS: What happened to your wife in this evacuation process?

YN: My wife also was forced to go along with me, with my four daughters and one of my sons.

SS: You mentioned earlier that two of your sons were killed in one of the camps. How did you find out or how do you know that your sons were killed?

YN: At the time the evacuation I knew that before the Khmer Rouge come into the city I had to flee out my home, and my two sons was still at my house at the time. And since then I have never seen them, from '75 up to '79, until the Vietnamese took over and drive the Khmer Rouge out of the country. I came back and I asked the neighbors, to find out that one of my sons had returned back to the hometown and were arrested and killed. The whole family was killed by the Khmer Rouge.

SS: Let me make sure I've gotten it correctly. Your sons returned to Phnom Penh?

YN: Actually, my hometown in Kompong Cham Province, and my sons were born there. But when the time was during the war, we had moved from Kompong Cham Province to Phnom Penh City. At the time the war is going on, I work in Phnom Penh City. I bought homes in the city and part of my family, my brothers and sisters, living in Kompong Cham. But when the time with the war really close, spread over the country, my hometown was not stable; therefore, they moved to Phnom Penh City. However, when the Khmer Rouge took over, they thought they could go back to my hometown, so therefore one of my sons go with them.

(Brief interruption.)

SS: Y Nor, can you tell us the ages of each of your children?

YN: I don't remember exact. My first son, he went to study in Europe, and he was born in about 1951. And my second son has died and he was born in 1953.

SS: So there was one son that was born roughly in '51 that died.

YN: My first son was born in '51 who went and study in Europe and come back. He's still alive and living with me.

SS: I see. How about the ages of the two sons that were killed?

YN: The first, my first son who die was born in 1953 and the second person who died, when he was killed I think he was about 20 years old.

SS: You mentioned also that you had four children that were killed during the Khmer Rouge regime?

YN: It's four, there are four of my children who died during the Khmer Rouge. Two of them were killed and two other die by diseases, starvation.

SS: Were those, the two that died during this time, were they daughters or –

YN: Yeah. They are my daughters.

SS: And how old were these children?

YN: The oldest was about 18 years old when she died and the youngest was about 15 years old when she died.

SS: Now, were these daughters in the same camp that you were in?

YN: The youngest in camp we are, but when they become ill they were forced to stay in a different hospital. At the time they die, I don't see them. I don't know.

SS: You were sent to the hospital also while, when you got sick in the camp.

YN: Yeah. I was also sent to the hospital at the same time. But my illness, they think that it was not serious enough to stay in the hospital, so I was forced back, to come back home.

SS: When you were in the camp did you go through any indoctrination?

YN: At the camp I was given papers, some sort of biography form to fill out to tell them I need to tell them what I did before the war during the Lon Nol regime. But I had to lie to them in order to survive. I didn't tell them the truth, that I was a government official, but rather I told them that I was a taxi driver.

SS: Did you know that if you told them you were a government official that they would bring harm to you?

YN: Yes. I knew they come and gather people who actually tell them the truth, that they were government official. Those people were taken away and disappear.

SS: Did you have friends in the camp also?

YN: Not in the camp, no. But I knew that my son, the one that went back home, that the Khmer Rouge knew that he work for the government and that's why they kill him.

SS: Did the Khmer Rouge torture people in the camp?

YN: I witnessed all those who were tied up and arrested and bring away to kill. And also, one family, the Khmer Rouge come to them and told them that they were being sent to a different camp. They got together their clothes and their belonging to go along, but later the Khmer Rouge bring back their clothes and their belonging just to show that these families were killed.

SS: Do you have any idea why the Khmer Rouge was so vicious?

YN: I believe that the Khmer Rouge try to destroy all the well-educated people, because that would make easy for them to control those who uneducated. In addition, one of my brother-in-law that were evacuate from the city, he was the commander in the soldiers during the war all the time. And he told them he was a carpenter, but when the Khmer Rouge found out that he was a commander, they try to arrest him. He refused to let them arrest him and they gather a lot of people and then shot him to death.

SS: The people shot him?

YN: The Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge soldiers. They all women soldiers.

SS: The Khmer Rouge consisted of both men and women as soldiers?

YN: Yes. They have women as soldiers also, men as soldiers.

SS: When you think back on the time under the Khmer Rouge regime, is there anything that stands out in your mind as perhaps one of the most horrible instances?

YN: The most that stick into my mind, the sadness in during this regime, is the people right were denied. I feel that I don't have freedom of speech. I can't say anything against them. The only thing I could do is to lie, you know, to survive.

SS: When did you finally get out of the camp?

YN: I finally get out in 1979 when the Vietnamese Communists took over.

SS: In 1979 you left the camp. Where did you go then?

YN: In 1979 when I left the camp I had to walk from Battambang Province to Kompong Cham Province to look for my two sons who were separated. And then after I asked, found out about them, then I have to walk to Phnom Penh.

SS: How far is it from the camp to your hometown province?

YN: It's more than 200 kilometers from Battambang Province to Kompong Cham Province.

SS: How long did that take you to walk?

YN: About one month.

SS: And so then you left your hometown province and went to Phnom Penh?

YN: Yes. I left my hometown and then go to Phnom Penh City.

SS: Where did you go after Phnom Penh?

YN: I lived Phnom Penh City in about a month. Then I had to leave Phnom Penh City to go to the border. I left Phnom Penh with one of my sons and two of my daughters come along.

SS: You had three of your children with you on the border. Was that the border with, the border along Thailand?

YN: It took me, from Phnom Penh City to the border is about a month to walk with my four children and then stayed overnight in a camp and then decided to go to Khao I Dang camp.

SS: And the Khao I Dang camp is along the border between Cambodia and Thailand, right?

YN: No. Actually, the Khao I Dang camp is not on the border. It's inside Thailand. And at that time the international organization have a lot of buses that took people from the border camp to Khao I Dang camp. That's where I decided to come to Khao I Dang.

SS: Was your wife with you at this time?

YN: Yeah. My wife was with me and the children. At that time there was about 11 people come along with me.

SS: I don't' know that you maybe need to stop the tape? (Brief interruption.)

INTERPRETER:- express that his mother and his foster mother and one of the niece who are blind because of during the war, they came from the hometown to live with him in Phnom Penh City. When they go back home, those three, his mother and his foster mother and a nephew were killed, or the niece. They dig in one hole to put them all three together.

SS: They buried all of them in the same –

INTERPRETER: Same spot, yeah.

SS: Do you know how they were killed?

INTERPRETER: He was told that they were hit and beaten to death. Could I interrupt a little bit? We're not shooting yet. He just want to express first. I'm not in the actual translation yet. I'm just trying to express

SS: We were shooting.

VOICE: That's fine. Keep going.

YN: Then when I go back home I was told that my mother, my foster mother and the niece was killed and buried in the same hole. Then when I dig up the hole and see that the skull on the front had, was broken. That's how I believed that they were beaten to death and they were hit in the head.

SS: Can you tell us -- I guess stepping back for a moment, can you tell us what it was like for you while you were still in the camp, on a daily basis?

YN: In the camp I always thinking that I will be killed in the forest. And the home they provide me is a small hut to stay. After my two daughters die, I was became serious ill again. At that time in the forest, this was the end of 1976, there's not enough medications, there is no food. I believe that I would die soon. Fortunately that I have another daughter in Sisophon camp that, there is a man, a carpenter, engage her and therefore I was brought into Sisophon camp and a place where I could be provided with some adequate food.

SS: How long did you stay in this camp?

YN: I live in Sisophon camp about six months.

SS: After you left the Sisophon camp –

YN: After I feel better at the Sisophon camp and they saw me, that I become old, they let me stay in one of the farm and take care of the sugar cane farm.

SS: This was at the Sisophon camp?

YN: It's about 30 kilometers from the Sisophon camp.

SS: So you were transferred to another camp.

YN: Yes.

SS: Were you separated from your wife at this point?

YN: No. At this time they send me and my wife together.

SS: You and your wife lived together at the camp?

YN: At that time I was told to take care of the sugar cane farm alone and my wife stay in the village near the farm, helped to produce fertilizer.

SS: Would you be able to go home in the evening and see your wife?

YN: I could see my wife only when I asked for permission.

SS: So you didn't see her every day.

YN: No.

SS: Was life different for you at this new camp in Sisophon, or the farm that you were at, than it was when you were at your original camp?

YN: My life in Sisophon camp where I take care of the sugar cane farm become a little bit better than the previous camp in Battambang Province. That was the worst, because at the time that I was told to take care of the sugar cane farm, then I was able to steal some sugar cane and some food to eat.

SS: When you were at the Battambang camp, you mentioned earlier that they had you digging canals. What other kind of work did you do there?

YN: At the time in the camp in Battambang Province I was digging canals and making dam, I was forced to taking care of cattle and try to get rid of rat in the rice farm and also taking care of the rice in the farm, such as chasing the bird.

SS: How old were you during the time that the Khmer Rouge occupied –

YN: In 1975 I was about 55.

SS: Do you remember how long you stayed in the Sisophon camp?

YN: Because I was moved to different place and several time, there's been since 1975 up to 1979 that several place that I was moved around a lot.

SS: Did you have an opportunity to see your daughter at the Sisophon camp?

YN: My daughter was sent to work on a farm and I was sent to take care of the sugar beet farm. We live far away from each other. I had a chance to see them only when I had permission to.

SS: How old was your daughter?

YN: My daughter was about, maybe over 20 at that time. I don't remember exact. I only remember that the older daughter was born in 1953.

SS: When you got out of the Sisophon camp, did you leave there on your way to the province, your hometown province?

YN: Yeah. After Sisophon camp I was transferred to the sugar cane farm with another camp at Pongrow. Then when the Vietnamese took over I went from Pongrow to my hometown.

SS: What kind of reaction did you get from the people in your hometown?

YN: When I go back to my hometown, people knew that the leaders come and they try to fight back the Khmer Rouge. And when they knew the Khmer Rouge was drive away, they try to kill the cattle to eat because of they haven't had enough food for a long time. Then the Khmer Rouge come back and shot and kill two people. And then when they saw me return back to my hometown, people were surprised and come and hug me, really happy to see me.

SS: Do you know how -- the two sons that were killed, do you know how they were killed?

YN: One son, I was told that he was arrested with his wife. At the time he was arrested his wife was pregnant and put in jail, and then they killed them both. And my other son, I didn't know exact what happened, because when he left with his uncle to another province.

SS: You eventually left Phnom Penh. Where did you go after you left there?

YN: When do you want to know when I left Phnom Penh when?

SS: During the time -- earlier you mentioned that you ended up in the Khao I Dang camp in Thailand.

YN: I walked directly to the border, and at that time I have a bicycle with me and I ride on a bicycle.

SS: So you rode from Phnom Penh to --

YN: The border. Yeah. I rode a bicycle from Phnom Penh to the border. My wife also ride bicycle with me.

SS: Oh, I see. How far is that?

YN: It's more than 200 kilometers.

SS: So it took you more than a month to -

YN: It's more than a month.

SS: What did you do once you got to the border?

YN: When I came close to the border I had to hire someone who know the way around the border to take me and my family to go through the border.

SS: If we could back up for just a second. When you and your wife rode to the border from Phnom Penh, how old is your wife?

YN: She was more than 50 years old at the time

SS: What was it like riding all of that distance to the border?

YN: She ride on my back and I ride the bicycle to the border.

SS: So she rode on your back while you - -

YN: On behind.

SS: On the back of the bike.

YN: Yeah.

SS: You had to stop along the way. Did you stop at –

YN: Yeah. I had to make several stop at the end of the day. So we'd go in the morning and until late afternoon, we stop and cook.

SS: Where did you sleep?

YN: Sometime there is a center that was vacant centers along the road and I could stop and sleep there. And at the time if I know people, I ask to stay with them.

SS: Once you left the - - once you go over into Thailand, where did you go after that?

YN: I came direct to Khao I Dang camp and then stayed there.

SS: You left Khao I Dang camp. Where did you go then?

YN: I live in Khao I Dang camp for seven months. Then I was transferred to Chon Buri camp for about five months. Then I came directly to U.S.

SS: Were your family members, the remaining family members, were they with you while you were in the –

YN: Yes. All the remaining family is with me at the times

SS: You had a sponsor over here in the United States?

YN: At first I thought I could go to meet my son in Germany, but it took a long time. Then I wrote a request to come to the United States. And at the time I was accepted to come to U.S., I don't know whether I have sponsor or not until I came.

SS: You mentioned that you had a son in Germany. How did he get there?

YN: He was a student in Phnom Penh City and he apply to go study abroad in Germany in 1974.

SS: This was the son that was studying in Europe you had mentioned earlier?

YN: Yes, that's correct. And he's here now with us.

SS: Do you remember when you got to the United States?

YN: In December of 1980.

SS: And you came straight to Minnesota?

YN: My first entry was at San Francisco. I stay there about two nights and then came to Minnesota.

SS: Where do you live here in Minnesota?

YN: At first when I moved to Minnesota I lived in Plymouth, then moved to Hopkins.

SS: Are you working now?

YN: Yeah. I work for seven years and then I became ill and disabled. I now apply for retirement.

SS: All of your, the children that came to the United States with you, they live here in Minnesota?

YN: One of my daughters moved to live in California, and the other daughters live in Minnesota, but she own another house now, live separately. And one of my sons stay with me and one of my other sons now stay at the university.

SS: How has it been for you and your family living in Minnesota?

YN: I found it's normal for my, personally, my life in Minnesota and any children who work have a better life. But I have a son who come from Germany has a business and now I feel like his business not going well.

SS: What kind of business does he have?

Kullune Sotto

YN: He open a photo shop.