TESTIMONY OF CHAMREUN TAN, on July 30, 1992, at the Cable Access Studio, St. Paul, Minnesota: The Examination was conducted by Mark Frey.

MR. FREY: Hello. Today is July 30, 1992. My name is Mark Frey. I'm a volunteer lawyer interviewer for the Khmer Archives Project, organized by the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee. I'm interviewing Chamreun Tan. And the location of this interview is Cable Access Studio in St. Paul, Minnesota.

EXAMINATION

MR. FREY: Hello, Chamreun. First of all, where were you born in Cambodia?

MR. TAN: I was born in Siem Reap City. It's northwest of Cambodia,

MF: Okay. How long did you live in that locale?

CT: I lived a few years, and after that my parent move back to live in Cambodia -- in Battambang City.

MF: Okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

CT: I have four brother and two sister. But right now only three alive. One brother still in Cambodia, and one sister in California.

MF: Okay. What is your ethnic background?

CT: I'm a Cambodian, but some part from Chinese.

MF: Okay. What did your father and mother do while you lived in Battambang?

CT: They are both working on their own business, and my mom just doing a small business, selling like groceries, something like that.

MF: Okay. You spent most of your time growing up in Battambang then, is that correct?

CT: Yes.

MF: Okay. Do you remember when the Khmer Rouge came to power?

CT: It was in April 17, 1975.

MF: And you were in Battambang at the time?

CT: No, I was in Phnom Penh City.

MF: What were you doing in Phnom Penh City?

CT: At that time I was the police officer.

MF: Okay. How long had you been living in Phnom Penh City?

CT: This almost two year.

MF: Two years, okay. What happened when the Khmer Rouge came to power, during those first few days, do you recall?

CT: That time I -- the first day of April 17, I went to pick up my friend that I lived with in Phnom Penh from the airport in Battambang. When I came back home that day, we decide to stay there. And everybody in the neighbor, they start to move out because the Khmer Rouge soldier asked us to leave the town only three day. And that time met many people on the street/ and we cannot get out from the place. So we decide to stay one night in the house. And the next morning we pack everything, but not all belonging take along with because I thought that we can come back to the city about three day. So we just take some of the belonging along with that in the morning of April 18, 1975.

MF: Okay. Where did you go when you left Phnom Penh City?

CT: I went with my friend that I live with and go south to what do you call, Chbar Ampoeu, just across Mekong River to the east of Phnom Penh City. And then we decide to stay there. But fortunately, we can't stay because they, the Khmer Rouge soldier, try to force us to move farther and farther. And we went to one place they call Dor Ta Prum, about ten kilometer from Phnom Penh City.

MF: Okay. At that time were soldiers guarding over you, or were you allowed to move freely on your own with your friend?

CT: In my area they allowed me to go south only. We cannot go different direction.

MF: Okay. What happened after all of this then?

CT: Stay there about a month, and then no chance to go back to the city. And then my friend and I decide to leave, and make decision to go to the hometown. And his hometown is Siem Reap Province. And my hometown is Battambang, so I want to go to see my parent.

MF: Okay. Were you able to travel to Battambang, or were you stopped beforehand?

CT: I can't. I was stopped by the Khmer Rouge soldier to stay in one small village between Siem Reap Province and Battambang Province, they call Phum Chhouk.

(Discussion held off the record.)

MF: At this time, Chamreun, approximately how old were you?

CT: During the Khmer Rouge took over?

MF: Yeah.

CT: I was 20 years old.

MF: Twenty, okay. Now -- okay. Were you able to make it or travel to Battambang? Did you eventually arrive in Battambang to see your family, or did they stop you before then?

CT: No, they tried to stop me and my friend along the way. But I just not lie to them, and we don't want to stay at a different place like that because I did not know anybody, no relative, so I just trying to get away. But I cannot at that time. That's why the last stop that I stay is in Kompong Thom Province, they call Phum Chhouk. The village is separate between Siem Reap and Kompong Thom.

MF: Okay. Now, was this a village that was established by the Khmer Rouge, or was this in existence before the Khmer Rouge came to...

CT: This is the existent village, that along the Highway No.6.

MF: Okay. How long did you remain there?

CT: I stayed there until the Vietnamese came.

MF: Okay.

CT: On January 9, 1979.

MF: Okay. Were there many Khmer Rouge soldiers there?

CT: Not so many there. But that village is the old place that the Khmer Rouge capture during 1970.

MF: Okay. How many of you were there that were being guarded or held there by the Khmer Rouge?

CT: The people that were along at that time, as I remember, is about 200 people. And they let us stay there. And then they put like one family with one house with the -- they call the old people to live with them, so they can provide shelter and some food or material a little bit to live with them.

MF: Okay. Now, what do you mean by "the old people"? Who were they?

CT: That mean the people that live with the Khmer Rouge before the Khmer Rouge capture the whole Cambodia.

MF: Okay. Were you in a household with another family, or with your friend, or who did you live with?

CT: I live with my friend and his wife with two children.

MF: Okay. Now, while you were living here, did they have you do work, or what did you do during the day?

CT: Yes, they sent me to work with them right away then the next day.

MF: And what kind of work did they have you do?

CT: They send me to work with the -- to dig the -- what do you call -- like a small stream that far from the place that we live; walk in the forest about five to six kilometer.

MF: Okay. Were these irrigation ditches?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. What other kinds of work did they have you do?

A Just the first time, they introduce us as a new people come to live in the village. And they kind of like a very cheerful, trying to make us happy to live with them. And they ask us to help do whatever they want. They assigned to do all kind of work.

MF: Okay. So were most of the tasks agricultural, like planting?

CT: Yes.

MF: Okay. Were you involved with road construction, anything like that, or mostly agricultural tasks?

CT: No, the first three month, just only digging irrigation water plan for that place. And then after three month, they send us back because that time is time to plant rice. So they sent us back, and we cannot do any more because they have too heavy rain. So we must come back to the village trying to plant rice to help the other people.

MF: Okay. What would be a typical workday in terms of the amount of time that you would work? When would you start in the morning and end at the end of the day?

CT: The first year that the Khmer Rouge took over, the work hours not really a time like the old farmer used to work. In the morning we get up. We usually have time pray first a little bit. And we start to go to the field about 9:00 a.m., and work until the sun set and come back home.

MF: Okay. That was the first year.

CT: Yeah.

MF: Then did things change after that?

CT: Then the next year they start trying to push people to work more hour, like trying to wake up people early in the morning and then go to the field.

MF: Okay. What time do you think that was when they would send you out to the fields to start working?

CT: Normally -- they don't have time. I don't know. But if the sun rise, everybody need to get up.

MF: Okay. And was that the way the workday went for the rest of the time you were there, sunrise to sunset?

CT: Yeah. And sometime when they need to finish work, and then they don't have enough time to do, they push us to work at night, too. You know, we come home and eat dinner a little bit, and then we must go back to work again.

MF: Okay. I've heard that they would have educational seminars to learn the philosophy of Pol Pot. Did they do that at your village where you stayed?

CT: Usually they do at the lunchtime, when the people have a break. After eating a little bit, the group leader choose to give us some rice, and trying to ask about the background for the new people that come to live in the village. And sometime they do at night. After we finish work, they always ask to have a meeting to learn about the new philosophy.

MF: Okay. Was that usually every day that that would take place?

CT: The first year, not every day, but the -- kind of like almost every week.

MF: Okay. Did they ask you about your background at all?

CT: They did.

MF: Okay.

CT: But I lie.

MF: And what would you tell them?

CT: I told them I was a student. And they believe it, because I was young that time. And I'm not married I was not married that time.

MF: What would happen if you told them your background?

CT: When I was there, the first few day, the people that I live with, they told me how to survive. Don't tell everything the truth. And -- because that family have some feeling, want to help us to survive during that time. So they told us to destroy all kinds of identification, some book that I brought with, just give to the people that –because they don't have paper to grow the tobacco. So it's good if you gave it to them, you don't keep it, then be safe.

MF: Okay. If you -- what about your background would make them suspicious of you? Would it be because you were a policeman at Phnom Penh City, or because of your family background in terms of your parents were shopkeepers, or what would it be that the Khmer Rouge would not like?

CT: The Khmer Rouge don't like people that work in the office. And also they don't like people that have light skin like myself. They always accuse us of the light Vietnamese, or the other ethnic group, because we are not really a pure hundred percent Cambodian.

MF: Okay. In your experience there, did you yourself were you ever subjected to physical abuse or abused in any way while you were in the village?

CT: For both, they have a physical abuse; they have a mentally -- a mental abuse. Because the Khmer Rouge tend to eliminate the people that from the city, because they accuse us as a strange person that never work in a farm. And the person that always take advantage over the farmer because of the Khmer Rouge, most of them are the farmer, and have a background that very low education. And they don't like the city people that used to take advantage from them. And then it kind like we runs (ph.) for them. But I don't know about the Khmer Rouge philosophy. But this is just only the feeling that I feel at that time.

MF: Okay. Were you yourself personally subjected to any abuse by the Khmer Rouge?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Do you remember any specific incidents that occurred?

CT: At one time they send me to work at -- to trying to make a water dam, in the -- they call Stung Sen. It's part of north Cambodia. And that time we worked from the sunrise to sunset. And then come to the barrack that they build for us to sleep. And when the work is not done on time, they ask us to work at night after dinner. Most of the time they did not allow us to come to the barrack to eat. They have the cook that brought the dinner to the place that we worked. And then they just distribute each plate for to eat for a while, about half an hour. And then they start push us to work again until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m., until midnight sometime. And their philosophy -- the people that – the leader, when they saw that it not finished, they want to push that kind of hard work like that, did not finish,

and then they start a new idea. Say they divide a piece of land. If you dig it fast, you can get finished -- their part that they gave it to us to do, you can go to the barrack to sleep early. And some people try to do that, to get fast, and then so they can have time, come back to relax or find something to eat, because we don't have enough food to eat. And they want people work. And we're trying to work hard to finish their part. And then they increase the portion of workload so that -- until nobody can finish before they wanted to come back.

MF: Do you recall any incidents, witnessing any incidents, where people were killed or just disappeared or beaten?

CT: At that time in 1977, I think, one of my friend went to work from the same village, and he disappear. I don't know what reason; why. Because they accuse him that he's not very active that trying to against their philosophy. But actually he's really tired; he's sick; he got diarrhea, and he went into the forest nearby. Because he got diarrhea, he cannot stay. And they accuse him that trying to get away from work. And later on, after that night, next day, we didn't see him. And they told us that they sent him back to the village. But when we came back, after we finish work over there, about six month, I didn't see him at all. So I don't know where they take him.

MF: Did this happen very often where people would disappear like that?

CT: Usually it happened to the people that emigrate from the city. But for the people they call old people, they tend to -- trying to re-educate them or send them to a different place.

MF: Okay. So your feeling is that if one was identified as having lived in the city, that the Khmer Rouge would try to systematically break them down and ultimately kill them.

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. As far as the deaths of people in that village, was it usually the case where violence was involved, or was it a case of just disappearances and also perhaps starving people, and they would just break down and die from the illness or a lack of food? Did that happen more frequently?

CT: Almost every day people that die by lacking of food. And also the illness, the common disease is diarrhea. And starvation, because they don't have enough food to eat. And some people die by accusing of their background, if they found out. Like my friend, he was the pilot. And the reason that they know him because he brought a -- maid -- at that time when he was in Phnom Penh City, he had a one maid -- it's a little girl about ten years old. And she's the real Cambodian kid because she have a different -- dark skin. And he brought her with, and told her, because that time her parent was separate. We cannot leave her alone there. And she want to come along with. When he took her with to live there, they look at, it's not like a relative or a friend or something because of the appearance. And later on, that girl, when she grow up, she told everything about our background that she knew. Then they found out that he was a pilot, and they tried to kill

him. But he trying to make it work as hard as he can to fulfill their -- what you say -their commitment. But one day they make a -- the whole village change by moving people from one village to another village. And that time is the time that they move people, they ask us to pack, and then move during that night; no warning. So at that night they told everybody need to pack, and then to move to another village. Because that -the new village need more people to finish their work. And then they send them through that night. And later on I found out that he die because I saw all the belonging that they took from them and distribute to the old people to use that.

MF: The little girl that lived with him, who did she live with after they moved to the village?

CT: No, they split. They took her to live with a different family.

MF: Okay.

CT: Because we have some problem fighting, arguing, because of the food, not enough food to eat. And then people try to survive; they steal from each other to eat. And then they saw that we have argument like that, and then they split family.

MF: Okay.

CT: Even myself, I split to live a different family. And he with his wife live with a different family.

MF: Okay. So was 1979, when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, was that the first time you fled from the village? Were there ever other incidents?

CT: That day I saw the Vietnamese troop came by, because I live near the highway. When I saw that, and all the Khmer Rouge leader escape the night before because they knew -- they have a radio, that they can listen to the news through the radio. And also they escape before. So this only the population that live in the village stay there. So the next day I saw the Vietnamese troop came by. And then everybody thought that the Cambodia was freed again. And then everybody trying to get into the field to grab all rice that we can to take so we can live for a while until we know what's going on in the country. And I live with a family that I stay there the whole -- during the Khmer Rouge. Try to help them to collect all the rice; keep it. You get about a hundred pound or something like that, and keep it. And one week later, I make decision – because that time a lot of people start moving to their own town. And I asked them that I'm going to see my parent. And one week later I left. I travel almost about two week, and I went to my hometown.

MF: Battambang.

CT: Yeah, with the other friend.

MF: Okay. Were you able to locate your parents?

CT: I know that at that time my parent did not escape from the Khmer Rouge yet. Because she was working to a new -- a different village from my hometown.

MF: That was your mother?

CT: My parent, my brother and my sister.

MF: Okay.

CT: When I came to my old house in hometown, I saw only my aunt, my cousin and the other relative; not my parent.

MF: Your parents, brother and sister, were they all sent together to the same village?

CT: I didn't know. But they say that the first year they send all together, and later on my brother split up from them because of the economy; no -- not enough food to eat. So he must fled to the other area trying to live by himself. At that time my parent was -- got home -- or my brother, my younger brother, we got home before them.

MF: Okay. What village were your parents and sisters sent to? Was it near Battambang?

CT: About 15 kilometer from Battambang City, along Highway 5.

MF: Okay. What was the name of that village?

CT: They call Kompong Phreas. And when the Vietnamese took over -- when they heard the Vietnamese troop came, the Khmer Rouge evacuate them from that place to -- along the highway, go east, they call plumtepadie Maung Russei City.

MF: Okay.

CT: And I in April -- I think in April '79, my dad and my brother, the youngest brother, and my grandfather was die at the same time during the big thunderstorm, because they both -- they all got struck by lightning. They die together.

MF: Where was that?

CT: At Maung Russei.

MF: Okay. Now, was there something significant about that particular location, or that village or prison camp? I recall someone telling me about a prison camp or a village near Battambang that there were bodies kept in a well, or they would throw bodies in a well. Was that -

CT: That they call Kach Rotes.

MF: Okay.

CT: This is a little further than –

MF: -Further, okay. So your father, one brother and grandfather -

CT: -Yeah.

MF: -- were struck by lightning.

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. And how long did you remain in Battambang?

CT: I -- after my grandfather and my father, my brother die, and two week later my mother and my sister get out. They both get out from the Khmer Rouge. And then she return back to meet me in my hometown again, I believe at the end of April of 1979.

MF: Okay.

CT: And I stay with them for a while. And we don't think that we can live because we have no food, nothing. So my mom and my sister and my brother decide to escape to Thailand during the month of between May and June, in that time.

MF: Okay.

CT: When I reach Thailand, came along the border they call Nong Chan Camp, I stay there about two week. At that time the Thai government brought all of the refugee back because of no international supervision in that camp, and too crowd. And the Thai government just lied to us, saying that they will move us to a new place, but actually they took us -- put us on a bus in the morning, and they drove us all day, all night, reach the destination is the north side of Cambodia, along the border. And in the morning the sunrise, they start to push us to walk across the border into Cambodia side. And that time a lot of people die because of the mine along the border.

MF: Now, was the train -- was this in the mountain slopes when people were --

CT: Yes, they call Phnom Prash Vehear, that the – they have like a cliff hang on the Cambodian side, but from the Thailand. It's like a plain field.

MF: So people were literally pushed to their deaths by-

CT: Most people that walk across early in the morning, most of them die because of the mine. And the mine just blow all day long, because people didn't know. They just step on

it. And my family, at that time, my relative, about 30 people decide to stay; do not want to run back to Cambodia, until that the Thai soldier just took the gun, trying to shoot us. And then we decide to leave the last chance. Then I stay along that border, because we heard of too many mine blow that time. So we decide to stay there about a week without food and water. We drink the water that just flow along with the bodies, some like that, for one week. And later on we saw the Vietnamese troop came by and help us to get out. So we walk -- followed their path; go back to Cambodia.

MF: Okay. And where in Cambodia did you go to?

CT: I was about two month back to my home village again.

MF: And how long did you stay in Battambang?

CT: I live there until 1982.

MF: Okay.

CT: And then I escape again.

MF: Okay. During that period what were you doing in Battambang, roughly between '79 and 1982?

CT: I start working with the communication and transport department in Battambang City as the -- a regular employee, because I did not want anybody know about my background. And after a year later, in 1980, almost -- yeah, that's close to '81 -- and then I moved to -- in the office, because they know that I can do some paperwork in the office. And my friend worked there, and they know me before. And I work in the office, asking the bookkeeping to make kind of a list for the employee, keep track salaries, something like that, and keep track all kind of operation. At that time it's no money yet. They make - each month they provide some food ration, so each employee can get rice.

MF: Yeah. Yeah, maybe we'll back up a little. I guess maybe the point I'm just mentioning, you started working in an office? Okay. Yeah. Now, you had mentioned that you had been working in an office, doing some work with bookkeeping, things of that nature? What other kinds of work did you do in the office?

CT: My job is the typing the employee list, and then finish all that work, and then have all the administrator sign on that list. And then we take the listing to the bank to get money, because we start to have money, I think, around 1980. The new government in Cambodia, they start to have money for people to spend in that time. And then with -- it's my job to help to make the lists like that.

MF: Okay. Did you have any other jobs while -- during this period before you left again?

CT: No.

MF: Okay.

CT: I worked in there until 1982, in month of June, June 1982.

MF: Okay. What was it like in Battambang with a new occupation, new people in power? Were there still incidents of abuses of power, or were things fairly stable and fairly calm? What was it like there?

CT: The new government, it still keep looking the people that have connected with some, I think, a Chinese background. And also they want to know about the background of the employee. Before you can get in to work in the office, or whatever, they always ask about the background, writing like a resume. But I did not trust them. I still hide my identity. I didn't tell anybody, except my friend that knew before.

MF: Okay. Were people being picked up -- were detention camps being -- still in existence in Cambodia at that time?

CT: Yep. They ask all the employee to work -- go to training like every two week, the same like Khmer Rouge. But they gave us some freedom to do something by their own. Because they didn't hold a common kitchen (ph.) or ask us to work as their group in the village anymore. So we can do whatever we want. But if the people that don't have enough resource to produce the crop, or something like that, the village leader provides, and then -- and they ask them to work as a team, but similar to the Khmer Rouge before.

MF: Okay. Now, you stated that you left Cambodia in June of 1982?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Why did you leave at that time? Did something happen to make you want to flee, or-

CT: I have some pressure from work. Because I feel that people trying to dig; to find out the background, my background. Because one time I was selected to go to study. And the people in that department, sort of like myself with the other friend that we're with, to go to learn how to -- because they each -- they create a new department they call taxation. And they know that I can go -- they select me to go. But before I can go, I need to have background check. My name was sent to the office they call – as in the Cambodian word, they call Kariyalay Chat Tang. That mean the appointment office. Before they can appoint you to go, you need to go through that office. They check all background. They come to look at physical. And they look at your face, trying to ask all their friends about the background. And after I went through that process, I fail. Because they look at -- they say that I'm -- I have some kind of a Chinese heritage. And they don't trust it.

MF: Okay.

CT: And the other friend, they pass, he can go.

MF: Okay. Now, what did that mean then if they failed you?

CT: That meant that you didn't get that opportunity.

MF: But did that mean they might come after you then later?

CT: I didn't know at that time, but I feel that it's not safe to stay. And also my relative have some problem in my hometown, because they knew that I will escape before, during 1979. All my family that will escape. And we don't want to work in the farm, the field again. So and then I try to escape. So the last time I escape with my wife -- because I got married in November 1981. And then I escape with my wife, and my wife parent and her sibling, and also my mother and my sister. Except my brother that he get married and have two children. He cannot escape at that time, so he decide to stay.

MF: Okay. And how long did it take you to get to the border?

CT: From Battambang to border, only one day.

MF: Okay. Did you have any problems crossing the border?

CT: Yeah.

MF: What happened?

CT: I got arrest one time. They put me in jail. They call Sisophon.

MF: Okay. They arrested you and put you in jail. What happened how long were you in jail?

CT: Only one day.

MF: One day?

CT: In the morning. And then late evening, my parent just negotiate with the people over there, try to bribe them to get me and my wife out of there.

MF: Okay.

CT: And then we come back to Battambang to live for about a couple month, and then we leave again.

MF: Okay. While you were in jail, did anything -- did they interrogate you or abuse you in any way?

CT: Because it's only one day, they didn't do anything yet. They just put me with the other people.

MF: Okay. You returned to Battambang. You were there for two more months, and then you --

CT: It was about two months.

MF: Okay.

CT: And then I escape again because I'm afraid. I have some problem with that. And then next time -- the last time I escape, I just hire somebody trying to help me to go through the -- along the way.

MF: Okay. Did you go by yourself, or did you go with the same group of people?

CT: The same group people, but a little bit different time.

MF: Okay. While you were in Battambang that last time, did anything unusual happen? Were authorities looking for you or –

CT: They keep an eye on me all the time, because I was in the bookkeeping and work with the money. The people just keep watching me working every day.

MF: Okay.

CT: I feel like a lot of pressure.

MF: You felt that they might eventually arrest you and perhaps send you away or kill you?

CT: Probably.

MF: Okay. So you had hired someone to help you and your family escape. And then this time you were successful in crossing the border?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. And then where did you go after you crossed the border?

CT: I stay in the -- they call Chumrumthmay. That is close to the border. Stay there about three month. And I don't have money to go again to Khav I Dang camp, because we need to walk about all night trying to get away from the Thai soldier, from the robbery -- the rob that -- if you don't know how to get there, you will be robbed by -- or assault by the Thai people, or by the soldier along the border.

MF: Okay. So then did you eventually end up in -

CT: -And then I reached Khav I Dang in August '82.

MF: Okay. With your family?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. All of you together. Okay. How long were you in Khav I Dang?

CT: I stay in Khav I Dang until December 1983.

MF: Okay. What did you do in Khav I Dang?

CT: I start working because I feel like so depressed there. When I was there the first few week I have nothing to do. Live like I live in the jail, because have no fun around; you cannot go out anywhere. And I start working with the - they call IOC, International Rescue Committee.

MF: Okay. And what kind of work were you doing with them?

CT: I was doing the lab technician. It's the -- in blood bank. And I keep the blood -- order blood for the hospital there. And I learn -- I have some background about that. And then that time I cannot speak English very well, so I just mix with French and English all the time. And my friend over there teach me to how – and keep learning from them.

MF: Okay. Did you go to any other camps after Khav I Dang, or did you come directly to the United States after that?

CT: No. I let's see, worked with the International Red Cross for a few month. And then in that time I file petition to come to United States. And later on I was accepted to come, and I went to work with the JVA, they call Job Voluntary Agency, for interpreting to help people in the camp until December '83. They moved myself and my wife to a processing camp in Chonburi. In that time, the JVA want me to go back to work with them again in Khav I Dang. And they ask me to. And I say, yes, decide to go back to work, but leave my wife in the Chonburi Camp for a while. And after I go back to work for a few -- about a month, then they say that they want my wife to go to Philippine to learn English first, and leave me to work with them for six month. And I have argue with them. I don't want to separate like that; and my wife doesn't want to do that. And then I break the contract. I didn't work. So they sent me and my wife to a new camp in Indonesia -- they call it Galang Camp -- in, I think, the end of December 1983.

MF: How long were you there?

CT: I stayed there six month until June 1984. During six month I work with the United Nation. They called UNHCR.

MF: What kind of work were you doing for the UNHCR?

CT: They ask me to help prepare -- check the list of the employee working there. And then they pay us a salary every week to the employee that work in the camp.

MF: Okay. And then -- okay. So then in 1984 you came to the United States?

CT: Yeah. I left Galang Camp to United States, but stay one week in Singapore Camp. They call a processing –waiting for the flight to come.

MF: Okay. And while you were in Indonesia and in Singapore, you were also -- they were telling you, or teaching you about the United States and how things operate here and that when you --

CT: Yeah. They have a class teaching three month for people

MF: Okay.

CT: But I don't have a chance to learn all of that, because they say that I can speak English; I can understand. So they ask me to work; to help them. But eventually I got a job with the UNHCR. So they kind of go to the class only one hour a day. And beside that I just go to work.

MF: Okay. Did you fly directly to Minnesota when you left Singapore?

CT: Yes.

MF: Okay. And did you come to the Twin Cities, or Rochester, or where did they --

CT: I came to the Twin City, because my mother-in-law came here first.

MF: Okay. And so did you move in with your mother-in-law then?

CT: Yeah.

MF: Okay. So once you relocated here, what were you doing? Were you taking classes, or did they have you start working?

CT: The Lutheran Social Service is my sponsor. And when I came, they just asked me to what job -- what kind of job that I want to do, or something like that. And I want to go to school, but I have no money, nothing. My sponsor want me to find a job first, because they said I can -- am able to work. And about three week after I stay in Minnesota, then I got a job. Because my sponsor worked with the Lutheran Social Service. And then I got a part-time job work there for about two month as a clerk, just help filing paper or keep track document for the refugee that came. And after that the job was run out. There's nothing to do, and I got laid off. I stay home about one week. And then the community,

Cambodian community in Twin City, they need somebody that able to work, and the -- I know one of my teachers is the board member of the organization. And he asked me to go to work there. And they offer me a job, a full-time job, to work as the director of MACT: So I start that job from September '84 until October '85.

MF: Okay.

CT: Because of a lot of pressure. And the job is so hard for me to do it, because I'm new in this country. I did not know how to raise fund; I didn't know how to looking for fund to support the program. Finally I decide to quit. But before I quit, I'm lucky that I got another job through the Ramsey County, because I'm working with them before so they know me, they ask me to -- because I said I don't want to work in that place anymore. And then they say you can apply job in the Ramsey County. And then I apply, got that job, and working here now.

MF: Okay. And you're with Ramsey County now?

CT: Yes.

MF: What is the -- what kind of a job is it?

CT: The first job that I got is as an interpreter to help people in the Ramsey County. But about three years later the County offered a test, that I can take a test to become a financial worker. And then I passed that time in 1989, so I become a financial worker in Ramsey County.

MF: Now, are you working with -- solely with Cambodians and other Asians, or are you working with a wide variety of groups?

CT: At my job now?

MF: Yeah.

CT: No, I'm working with the American client; not a refugee.

MF: Okay. So no work at all with -- okay.

CT: No. I prefer to work with American, because I know too many people in the community. And I don't want to involve it because of the confidential --

MF: Sure.

A.-- and the problem with communication or whatever. So I'd rather work with -- you know, when they put me in the job, they asked -- I didn't have a chance to choose that, but they put me work with the American clients, so I decide to stay. I didn't move to a refugee unit.

MF: Are there things that concern you, or problems that you face -- having been in the United States, particularly Minnesota, for the past few years, are there issues that concern you or you do think about a fair amount in terms of your transition into U.S. society and also perhaps fellow Cambodians that have moved here? Are there any kinds of things that trouble you?

CT: My concern is for Cambodian people, especially the family without a single family, a single parent, and also with both parents in the household. Most of Cambodian that came to the United States during '80 to now, most of them, they don't have a lot of education background. And most of them farmer, or a citizen that live in the city, but they did not have a good background about the skill that fit in this society. And they have a lot of problem to adjust it. But for myself, that I can speak, I can adjust it faster than them. And the people that they know nothing about the language, they've turned it really hard to adjust it. And the family that -- some people that cannot read or write their own language, it's really frustrating for them to learn the other language, because their own language, they don't know how to read and write. They know how to speak, communication. But for reading and writing it's really hard. And then it made them more harder than anybody that can speak or read and write their own language. So it's my concern is that those people are really hard to adjust to this society. And then that the State, the government in this state, should understand and should help them.

MF: Okay. Do you think -- what do you think would be the best approach to that, education, or -- what do you think would work in terms of perhaps helping them adjust better?

CT: They need a lot of support, especially the family support. Because they used to live in the period of time that have a lot of crisis; that need to survive. And also that they have a horrible time, that they never -- they cannot forgot about that. Because of the life that they have gone through during the Khmer Rouge make them -- some people that almost lost memory. They become so much depressed. But they don't know how to speak out. They don't know how to tell the other. And our culture, people –nothing want to share their problem to the other unless they trust -- ask like close relative. If you are working, try to help them, if they don't know you, they don't want to share any idea, or they don't want to share any problem with you. So you cannot help them. But if they understand the culture, they understand the problem trying to help them. But sometime people offer the problem, so we can help them. And the other thing right now is, that the kid growing up here, they learn the language faster than the parent, and then they have a different point of view. Some kid that grew up in the camp when they came here, they don't know about the Cambodia culture at all. And then they kind of like have a problem between parent and children, and between -- because the kid, when he live in home, the parent want him to be Cambodian, to discipline him the way that they want. But when they go to school, they have another law that they must follow, they must obey, with this society. And then when they go back to school, it's kind of like two different society for them. So it's hard to -- so, as I say, we need to have some people that understand the problem try to help them to

adjust by offering more education to them, or some kind of like a training to them, try to, you know, make them involve with the society; become a productive citizen.

MF: Okay. Do you feel that you've worked on a lot of the -- in terms of what you went through in Cambodia, do you feel that you had opportunities to address that -the experience and work through all of that yourself? Do you feel like you -

CT: I think so. Because when you go to work, you can see a lot of thing. Most of -- I feel that I knew a lot of thing in this country more than I knew in my country. And in term of like the government or the system, how to process in this society. Because when I was in Cambodia, I didn't know about the Congress, how many Congress in Cambodia, how the legislature worked, or something like that. Because in school they never teach you to learn. They just give you only summarize, general literature a little bit, math a little bit, something like that. Unless you get into the university, you trying to be a doctor, or a professor, or whatever. And then you can know only the brand that you go. And it's no general knowledge like this society. So it's people like myself that want to learn more, want to -- that have a better understanding English, can communicate with the people here so we have a better chance to adjust, to live in this society. So the people that -- I think the problem is the communication. If the people can learn the language faster, so they can adjust whatever they want.

(Discussion held off the record.)

MF: My final question is, in view of what you experienced in Cambodia when the Khmer Rouge were in power, how have you dealt with the nightmare that you went through? What kind of coping mechanisms have you devolved? How have you worked out all of those issues?

CT: Until right now -- when I think about when the time during the Khmer Rouge, I still have a bad dream. Usually if I work hard and so tired during the day, when I go to sleep, I would dream about during the time. Sometime I saw like the Khmer Rouge or the people the leader, the Khmer Rouge, the soldier that's trying to cut me; wanted to kill me, something like and after a terrible nightmare like that, just woke up in the middle of the night, and I couldn't sleep at all. So all my mind of thinking, I start to – trying to suppress them down; try to forgot about that; trying to think about the future instead of the past. And I don't want to all the dream come back again in my mind; just trying to think everything in the future. But most of the time when I have a bad dream like that, I couldn't sleep all night. And we try to take like a medicine to make it -- get headache, you take medicine so I can sleep. And especially, I trying to work with -- this is just only myself, that I know that I can forgot all those things easily because of working with the other people, have a lot of friend, talk about the future, talk about something else that fun. Because I can easy to forget all those things. But if it comes up in my mind, it take at least 24 hour, something like that, just wandering around all those things. And I know if it got the problem just about away, take a walk or go somewhere else; talk with a friend; different subject. Try to forget that. Sometime like I have an American friend asking you about it. I just talking a little bit, and then want to change to the other thing.

MF: Okay. Well, do you have anything else that you would like to add that we haven't covered?

CT: I don't know.

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