

# Interview of Meas Chantha

*A: Interviewer: Seng Pharida*

*B: Interviewee: Meas Chantha*

## Summary of the Interview

*Meas Chantha was born in 1966 in Lumhach village, Kandal province. In this interview, she shares several stories from her family history, as well as how she survived the Lon Nol and Khmer Rouge eras. She currently works at an orphanage in Kampong Thom province where she watches young children who have lost their parents.*

A: So today I'd like to thank you for allowing me to interview you. What day is it?

B: The 20th—

A: It is the 20th of January 2019, and we are in Achar Leak village.

B: Mhm—

A: Achar Leak district, Steung Saen Municipality, Kampong Thom Province. First, I'd like to thank you and ask what your full name is.

B: Meas Chantha!

A: Meas Chantha.

B: Yes.

A: Do you have any other names you are known by?

B: They also call me Beun.

A: Ah, right! And how old are you?

B: If I'm using what I put for work, I am over 50, about 52.

A: 52 years old. Do you remember your birthdate?

B: I know I was born in 1966.

A: Do you remember the month?

B: 1966, the month I don't know. I don't remember, because when I left Phnom Penh at the age of 13. I depended on my parents [to know], and when they died, I didn't know.

A: What about on your ID card?

B: My ID card?

A: Yes.

B: On my ID, I put the 5th—it's not very clear.

A: If you remember just the month that's alright too.

B: On here it says the 5th day—and for the month—I've forgotten.

A: Do you remember which Khmer [lunar] year you were born in?

B: The Khmer Year I was born in?

A: Yes.

B: I don't remember, I don't really remember anything.

A: Okay. What village and commune you were born in?

B: I was born in Lumhach village, Angk Snuol district, Kandal province.

A: In Kandal province?

B: That's right.

A: Uh—right, in Kandal province. And what are your parents' names?

B: My father? My father's name is Meas Yon.

A: What about your mother?

B: My mother's name is Doem Mon.

A: And they're—

B: Dead.

A: Where did they live?

B: They are dead.

A: They are dead, but when they were alive where did they live?

B: They live in the same place as I said, in Lumhach Commune, Angk Snuol District, Kandal Province.

A: Do you know where their hometown is?

B: Their hometown?

A: Yes.

B: Their hometown is there too!

A: Both husband and wife?

B: Yeah, both husband and wife.

A: Oh!

B: My mom is from Thnal Totueng, my dad was in Angk Snuol, right next to each other.

A: Oh, right next to each other?

B: Yes, right near each other.

A: Oh, okay! And how many siblings do you have?

B: I have five siblings; one is dead, four are still alive.

A: One dead, four alive—and of those four, what are their names?

B: The first, the oldest, is named Meas Chantha.

A: Yes.

B: The second, their name is Meas Chanthon.

A: Yes.

B: The third, Meas Chandy—oh! It is actually Meas Channy. The fourth is Meas Chandy, and the fifth is Meas Chanthol. But Meas Dy—Chandy, has already died.

A: She was a girl, right?

B: Yes, she was a girl.

A: How did she die?

B: She died during Pol Pot.

A: Oh. How old was she at the time?

B: At that time, she was not that old, probably about 12 years old.

A: So, do you know why she died?

B: During the Pol Pot era—oh! It was during the coup d'état, they were hit by an M79 grenade that landed at their feet.

A: Oh!

B: When Pol Pot came to power, they didn't have any medicine and [her wounds] became infected.

A: And her wounds caused her pain until—

B: She suffered until Pol Pot came in and took her to Phnum Lieb, and she died at Phnum Lieb. We didn't know when she died, but she died there during Pol Pot.

A: Okay. So, your siblings who are still alive, where do they live?

B: They are all here, except for Chanthon who went to Phnom Penh.

A: In Phnom Penh. And what kind of work does Chanthon do?

B: Police!

A: A police officer! What about the others?

B: After Chanthon, Chan also works for the police. Chanthol is a teacher.

A: Chanthol is a teacher.

B: I work for an orphanage.

A: You work for an orphanage! What do you do there?

B: I watch the young kids, as a caretaker.

A: You watch the kids?

B: Yes.

A: So you look after the kids they bring there?

B: Yes, I watch them.

A: How many kids do you look after?

B: I watch three or four young kids.

A: Three or four kids? You watch—

B: I watch them all together, but they separate them into groups, and I only watch three to four of the younger ones.

A: Yes.

B: That's right. Before, I used to cook for about 30 total, but when I got sick I stopped. Watching the young kids is easier, I don't have to go to the market and do other tasks.

A: Oh, yes.

B: It's a lot easier to watch just four, you see?

A: Are they rambunctious?

B: When they come here they are rambunctious, when they play here they are free. When we are there, they are locked inside, and they can't go anywhere except in the house.

A: Oh!

B: But when they come here they have freedom, and they don't listen to anyone.

A: So how old were they when you started watching them?

B: Since they were small. From three years on—this one just turned one year old, and this one is two years old. This one is one.

A: Yes. Do you know why did their parents bring them here?

B: Their parents died, so they were brought here.

A: Oh!

B: Yes, they are all orphans.

A: Right.

B: They don't have parents so they were all sent here. These two, Bar and Bat, their mother passed away too. Their mother died just two days after she gave birth to them. All those who come here don't have any parents alive, so they are brought here.

A: So they have watched them since they were infants, right?

B: Two of them, Bar and Bat, have been here since they were two days old. I've watched them the whole time, and it's been 6 years already.

A: So it's been six years already?

B: 6 years already, for those two there.

A: Oh!

B: And these other two I've been watching for two years.

A: They're still very small then.

B: I've cooked for them for two years, and watched them for three, almost four years.

A: Is watching them tiring?

B: No, it's not too tiring. I bathe them with water from the well, that I put in a tub for them.

A: They're not too difficult then.

B: Yes, it isn't too difficult. Caring for them isn't too bad.

A: Oh!

B: They're rambunctious sometimes, and I have to discipline them a little.

A: [Laughs] That's pretty normal, sometimes kids—

B: Mhm—

A: Sometimes they won't listen to us until we act strict.

B: This one doesn't listen, this one's mean. Sometimes I'll push it down when it's bathing so it can't breathe [for a short moment].

A: [Laughs]

B: That scared it—

A: Right.

B: [Unintelligible]

A: [Laughing] Do you remember what your parents did for work when they were alive?

B: When they were alive?

A: Yes.

B: He drove a car.

A: Your father drove a car?

B: He drove a car and my mother worked odd jobs.

A: What kind of car did he drive?

B: A taxi.

A: Oh! A taxi?

B: That's right.

A: Where did he take passengers to and from?

B: From Phnom Penh to Kampong Speu Province, he came from Phnom Penh to Kampong Speu—back and forth.

A: Oh. What about your mother?

B: My mother worked transporting goods.

A: She worked transporting goods—

B: She transported goods, meaning for instance, she would buy bananas, dried fish, smoked fish, and brought them from Phnom Penh to Kampong Speu.

A: Oh!

B: Once we got there, we would call someone and they would send someone to get it, and we would wait at the house.

A: And when they got there, they would take it.

B: Yes, they would take it farther.

A: Was your father the one to drive there, and your mother would take the goods to be sold?

B: No!

A: Because he would only take one trip—

B: My father drove the taxi, he bought the taxi for himself, he didn't borrow anyone else's.

A: Yes.

B: He earned the money so that my mother could stay at home and take care of the children, but when my father left [for work] my mother left as well! [Laughs]

A: [Laughs] She wanted to have some money for herself too!

B: She didn't like to spend her husband's money.

A: Oh!

B: Yes. She knew how to work. She was going to be a teacher, but my father stopped her. My mom is beautiful, she looked like she was mixed [ethnically Khmer and Lao].

A: Oh!

B: Like my youngest sister—her face was pretty, and she was tall and thin, not overweight like others.

A: [Laughs] Yes!

B: Yes. She was very pretty, and all the men loved her, and so [my] father didn't allow her to be a teacher.

A: Oh!

B: So when that happened, she stopped and started doing this for work instead.

A: Right.

B: My father said that he wondered why when he came home, he smelled dried and raw fish, but didn't see any because the customers had already come and taken it all.

A: [Laughs]

B: That's right.

A: That's a way to do it. And how old were they when they died?

B: They died in '77.

A: '77—

B: During the Pol Pot [era], when the Vietnamese came, and the war was almost over—that's when they died.

A: When Pol Pot came, where did they live?

B: When the Vietnamese came!

A: The Vietnamese came—?

B: Yeah, it was then, they died in '77 or '78, [in] '79 the country was liberated. She died one year before the war ended.

A: And why did she die?

B: Well, she was used to having coffee and kuyteav for breakfast. When the Khmer Rouge gave them all a pan of rice porridge for every 100 people, how could she live?

A: Oh! So she was malnourished?

B: They were deprived of food.

A: They weren't given enough food.

B: That's right, they were starved to death.

A: So how old was she when she died?

B: I'm not sure, I was very young at the time. If she was alive now, she would be in her late 60's, almost 70's.

A: So she was 30, or a little older than 30.

B: When she died, she was probably over 40.

A: Over 40?

B: 45 at least!

A: I see!

B: Yeah!

A: Okay. So were they strict, your parents? Were they strict or more gentle in nature?

B: No, my father was very gentle. He always smiled.

A: What about your mother?

B: My mom was strict, but she always had a reason. She wasn't just mean for no reason.

A: Right.

B: That's right.

A: Well, do you remember your grandmother?

B: My grandmother? Like her father and mother?

A: Yes, on either your father's or mother's side?

B: On my dad's side, my grandfather's name was Grandpa Meas, and my grandmother—I only know Grandpa Meas, and—oh! His wife's name was Grandma Pech.

A: Grandma Pech—

B: Grandpa Meas and Grandma Pech, on my dad's side.

A: What about your mother's side?

B: On my mother's side, their names were Grandpa Dim and Grandma Phy.

A: Where did your grandparents on your father's side live?

B: They live here in this district too.

A: In the same district?

B: Yes. We're all in the same district.

A: What about your mother's side?

B: On my mom's side, they lived in Thnal Totueng. My dad lived in Angk Snuol, so they lived close to each other like I said. [About 6 km apart.]

A: So that means their in-laws lived close by?

B: Very close by, yes.

A: Oh!

B: Right next to each other!

A: Okay. And have you seen them before?

B: I know their faces, yes.

A: Yes. Do you remember how old they were when they died?

B: Oh, He died a long time ago, when I was young. He died during the Pol Pot era—during Pol Pot, in 1970-something.

A: Oh!

B: And my grandmother died a long time ago. She died in the '70s—my grandmother on my mother's side, Grandma Phy.

A: Yes.

B: Grandma Phi died in 1970 during the coup; she got sick and died.

A: She got sick and died.

B: In 1970, I was still a child. And on the other hand, my grandfather on my dad's side, Grandpa Meas, he died when my father was only three months in the womb.

A: Oh!

B: But my grandma just passed recently.



A: So that means he had never seen his face—?

B: No, he had never seen my grandfather's face.

A: Okay.

B: My grandfather, my father never knew. But he did know my grandmother.

A: Right.

B: Yes.

A: Okay—

B: On my mother's side, I have seen and know everyone. Grandpa Dim I know, and Grandma Phy I know too.

A: Yes. [Chuckles]

B: But on my father's side, I only know my grandmother. I don't know my grandfather.

A: Right.

B: I've just heard people talk [about him].

A: Do you remember any stories about them, that you know?

B: I remember that my grandfather—Grandpa Meas, was a magical healer, I know that he was a magical healer.

A: Like a Khmer traditional healer?

B: A Khmer traditional healer.

A: Oh—

B: Yes. And on my mother's side, there were healers too. My grandfather on my mom's side was a healer, and he practiced insufflation [Khmer healers would recite incantations and spit chewed betel leaf on a sick person to cure them]. They cured many people—the healers from both sides of the family.

A: Okay—

B: But the healers on my father's side were very talented. Grandpa was skilled, and my dad was skilled as well. For instance, if someone who was sick and covered with a white cloth was brought to him, he could tell you if they would live, and they would live. If he said they would die, they would die.

A: Oh! He knew.

B: He was that powerful. Oh! The villagers feared him. Many of them got scared just by mentioning Grandpa Meas' name.

A: Scared how?

B: They were scared because he was a talented healer. If there was a dead person covered with a white cloth, he could say they would live and they would live, and if he said they would die, they would die.

A: [Chuckles]

B: It happened just like he said.

A: Huh!

B: Whatever he watched would be healed. People brought him pairs of water buffalo—they brought them to my Grandpa Meas.

A: Oh!

B: Because some people didn't have money, they brought pairs of buffalo for him. When he cured their family members, they thanked him that way.

A: Oh! He was an expert in that then?

B: That's right. My grandfather on my mother's side was also like that. My younger brother was sick. [...] When my grandfather came in, he asked, "Why do say that it's because he kept his oath to me?" [...]

A: [Laughs]

B: The more we watched, the more he [hurt].

A: I see!

B: [Whispering] When that happened, we prepared an offering.

A: What?

B: He was sleeping on the mat. After we prepared the offering and performed the insufflation, he was healed. That's what happened! You better believe it!

A: Okay, that's right. Sometimes intangible things may seem superstitious, but we cannot deny them.

B: That's right!

A: Even though I am a religious person even though some things we do not believe, we can't deny them.

B: That's right.

A: For all of that—

B: We can't deny it!

A: Yes. Such as things like spirits—

B: Yeah!

A: Whatever it is, even though I am a Christian, I still believe that there are spirits.

B: That's right.

A: There's nothing to it, it's just normal.

B: Right.

A: That's right. Right. Before, I was asking questions about your grandparents. What about

your own parents and some of their stories? Do you remember anything about them at all?

B: My grandparents?

A: Your parents, I asked about your grandparents just a bit ago.

B: That's right.

A: [Laughs]

B: What about my parents?

A: I want to know if you remember any stories or anything relating to them, stories that make you happy, or that kind of thing.

B: Uh, my father and mother—they never made it difficult for their children.

A: Yes, yes.

B: They always gave me peace and happiness. When I was in school, they kept their money in a drawer, and however much I needed they gave me.

A: Yes.

B: They never said I took too much money or too little, no. They did what they could for us to be happy.

A: That's good. So they were easy-going?

B: Yes, they were easy-going.

A: I see that they really provided for their children.

B: Yes, and they loved us. They loved their children and treated us with affection. They never made any of us upset because of cursing or scolding their children at all.

A: Right!

B: It's hard to find good parents like that—

A: Right!

B: Parents that are good.

A: So, how long did you live in Angk Snuol before coming here to Kampong Thom?

B: Angk Snuol—because of the coup that overthrew the King, when the Khmer Rouge took over completely, we ran.

A: Yes.

B: We fled to Battambang; We were in Battambang for 3 years, 8 months, and 20 days. They liberated us in Battambang.

A: Yes.

B: Right. When we left Battambang to go to our hometown, but we didn't make it there and we have been in Kampong Thom since then.

A: In Kampong Thom—

B: That's right, we've been here ever since.

A: Yes. You and your younger siblings came here to work and have stayed since then?

B: No, I've been with the orphans ever since I arrived here.

A: Oh!

B: Ever since I was younger.

A: Yes.

B: Since I was young. After our education, my younger sibling worked as a teacher, another with the police, and I've watched the orphans this whole time.

A: Okay. So you've been here this whole time.

B: Right.

A: You've been here and haven't been back home. But now you have relatives living in this district, is that right?

B: I have relatives here—my mother's siblings.

A: Oh!

B: But on my father's side, it was just him.

A: Oh, he was an only child?

B: Yes, my grandmother only had one child.

A: Oh!

B: My grandpa died when my dad was only 3 months in the womb.

A: Yes.

B: My grandma didn't take another husband.

A: Oh, your grandma didn't take another husband? [Laughs]

B: Yes, she only had the one.

A: Right. So, uh—do you have any relatives living abroad?

B: That live abroad?

A: Yes.

B: Yeah! just my uncle. He is the youngest—of my grandpa's children he is the youngest.

A: The youngest child of your grandpa—

B: Right.

A: Where is he?

B: He is in Camion or Meyong, or whatever they call it.

A: Where is that?

B: France!

A: Oh, France. How long has he been there?

B: He has been there since '75.

A: '75. Oh, since Pol Pot came in.

B: '75—yes. When Pol Pot came.

A: Right. And are you married, yourself?

B: Me?

A: Yes.

B: No, I'm not.

A: Okay—

B: Live alone! [Speaks in English]

A: [Both Laugh] "Live alone!"

A: [Laughs] Oh my goodness, you're hilarious! I didn't know! They just gave me questions to ask you for the interview, and I just wanted to know—

B: Yes.

A: I wondered because I see you have, like, so many children here. I thought, "Are those hers or what?"

B: But they are all orphaned children.

A: Yes. If you don't have a husband, that's no problem, you still have all these children! [Laughs]

B: Mhm—it's like the foreigners say, "Four children, no husband!" [Speaks in English]

A: [Both Laugh] "Four children no husband!"

B: Yes! [Laughs]

A: You've got four children, but no husband! [Laughs]

B: [Laughs] "4 children, no husband."

A: Okay! So, do you know any languages other than Khmer? English, or anything?

B: English, French—I know a little bit. I know enough to figure some out by myself.

A: Oh!

B: I don't know a lot.

A: You can speak a little bit!

B: That's right, enough to say hi and visit.

A: Oh!

B: Like for ordering food, saying "How are you?" and such.

A: Yes. And your Khmer is—?

B: I learned Khmer until I was in tenth grade.

A: To the tenth grade, but in the generations before?

B: Back in that generation! [Likely before the Pol Pot era.]

A: How is it compared to today?

B: The 10th grade, before it was, uh, grade—9th grade—the 10th grade now, I don't know what grade it would have been.

A: Right. Can I ask when you were in school, which school did you go to?

B: I studied at Thnal Totueng School.

A: Thnal Totueng?

B: Yes.

A: Thnal Totueng in Kampong Cham?

B: Thnal Totueng in Kampong Speu.

A: Kampong Speu?

B: Yes.

A: Oh—okay! Do you remember the name of the school you went to there?

B: The school was Thnal Totueng Primary School.

A: Thnal Totueng Primary School?

B: Right.

A: Okay—

B: The school was called Thnal Totueng Primary School.

A: So, what jobs have you worked from your childhood until now?

B: I haven't worked [any other jobs], I've been at the orphanage the whole time.

A: At the orphanage. Did you study—?

B: Right, we studied and when that finished, Pol Pot came.

A: Oh!

B: When Pol Pot came, I didn't do anything [for work].

A: Right.

B: Yes. At the end of the Pol Pot [era], I came here to the orphanage, and I started working here—

A: Oh!

B: Just in this era [after the Pol Pot era].

A: Right.

B: I've watched the orphans ever since the beginning.

A: Oh! You watched the children at the orphanage?

B: Yes, I watch them. [To the children] "Hey you behind Leab, don't do that, I'll spank you!"

A: So—

B: "Don't get into and break other people's things, okay?"

A: So, could you tell us what has changed ever since you were a child until now? [What has changed in] your life?

B: Oh, for me, I don't know about any changes. If I left the orphanage, I would still be watching children. I am always at the orphanage; I don't leave to go anywhere. I haven't left here, not yet.

A: Oh, okay!

B: So for 40 years I've been at the orphanage, I haven't changed. What were you trying to say?

A: No, like was there a time when you didn't have much money, or couldn't do much, or didn't have very much, or weren't very educated?

B: Oh!

A: Stuff like that!

B: Oh, I see.

A: Yes!

B: At the orphanage—before, like when I was an orphan, I never had enough. We were still together, but there wasn't enough food for us to eat and such.

A: Yes.

B: We were so poor back then, we couldn't learn in school, we just tried to survive.

A: I see. I'd like to ask you, what has been the hardest time in your life? A time that was very difficult—

B: Before, I said it was difficult during the time of Pol Pot. It was difficult to find any place [for relief]. I can't even talk about it—the time of Pol Pot.

A: Yes.

B: But ever since Heng Samrin came, [President of the National Assembly since 2006] they manage us, but I can't say it's difficult. Because they take care of us completely.

A: Right.

B: We don't have to do anything difficult. These days they have solved everything for us. We just go and get our money and buy food to eat for ourselves.

A: [Laughs]

B: I can't say things are hard. It's just normal and simple.

A: No, we just wanted to ask if you've had anything in your life that has been especially

difficult, like—you could say that as a child it wasn't too difficult because you had your father and mother, right?

B: A mother to take care of us, yeah—

A: So, when Pol Pot came in, you were in Battambang. What did they make you do?

B: I worked transplanting—

A: Transplanting—

B: Transplanting rice.

A: At that time, how old were you, about?

B: When I was transplanting rice?

A: Yes.

B: At that time, let's see—when we left Phnom Penh, I was a full 13 years old.

A: 13!

B: Yes, 13 years old.

A: Yes.

B: I was 13 then. And then Pol Pot came, and after 3 years, 8 months, and 20 days, I was 18 years old—18 years or older by then.

A: Yes.

B: Over 18 years old.

A: So they made you transplant rice?

B: I transplanted all day, there wasn't anything else I did.

A: You transplanted every day?

B: It was like this—they assigned a group to do one task, and another to do another task, and so on. If they assigned you to a group for harvesting and you didn't know how to do that, you could go to the work leader and ask to be switched to the transplanting group.

A: Huh!

B: It was like they pitied us.

A: Yes.

B: They had us transplant the whole time.

A: At that time had they evacuated you from—?

B: They evacuated me from Phnom Penh.

A: And from Phnom Penh to Kampong—

B: We went to Battambang.

A: Battambang?



B: That's right.

A: Where in Battambang did you go?

B: Battambang, in Phnom Srok district near—in Phnom Srok district, near Area 5.

A: Phnom Srok district?

B: Phnom Srok district!

A: Okay—So at that point you had transplanted for 3 years.

B: 3 years and 20 days—all I knew was transplanting all night and day.

A: [Laughs] You didn't do any other work outside of that?

B: No, I didn't do anything outside of transplanting! [Laughs]

A: But they didn't abuse you, did they?

B: No, they didn't abuse me. I was in an area—I mean, every area was different, they put me in the mobile unit for transplanting. They gave us rice in the morning and porridge at night. It wasn't like in other villages where you went to die. If I was in a different village, I would have died.

A: Yes.

B: This area was heavily occupied. It was very strong here.

A: Oh!

B: In this place, we endured. If you couldn't endure you died.

A: Because you'd work all night and day—

B: All night and all day, but we were still exhausted. It was like an island; you'd look around and all you could see were fields of rice.

A: Did they give you enough to eat?

B: They let me eat porridge in the morning and rice in the evening. But it was always just a small plateful.

A: Yes.

B: No matter if we were full or not, we would just eat.

A: But that was a bit better than other areas, right?

B: Right. It was better than other areas.

A: Okay—I would like to ask another question, about what has been good, and what has been difficult for you.

B: It was difficult!

A: I'd like to ask—what has made you happy, from when you were a child until now? When was the happiest time for you?

B: I was happy when I was living with my parents; that was one part that made me happy.

A: Right!

B: But even living today is one part that makes me happy too. I live in an orphanage, and they don't have parents, so we do them some good.

A: Yes.

B: I do good for them. We make some mistakes and do some good.

A: [Laughs]

B: Right?

A: Yes.

B: Like if they do something good, I am good to them, but when I am mad, I hit them to teach them a lesson. When they've done something wrong that's the reason, I'll hit them.

A: Yes.

B: If they're being bad, I'll punish them, but if they are well-behaved I won't. Like just barely, a kid just went and stood in front of a car, you know? Isn't that a time you should discipline them?

A: [Laughs]

B: That's how it is.

A: Yes—

B: We have our reasons to do things. And it is fun in a way, like when I work and I get paid for it.

A: Right.

B: When we live with so little it's hard to go forward.

A: Yes.

B: Because I have a salary—before I didn't have an income, and that was a different kind of difficult.

A: Yes.

B: Now, I have an income, and I'm free to save a little bit. It feels like God has helped me a little bit at a time! [Laughs]

A: [Laughs] Right! I'm almost through all my questions, I've been asking them for a while already. The last question they have us ask is, "What religion do you identify with?"

B: Oh, currently?

A: Whatever time you'd like.

B: Oh—I don't discriminate, I will attend any church.

A: Yes, yes.

B: Because I'll walk side by side with any. I respect Buddhism, and I respect—what do they call it, what religion?

A: Christ?

B: Christ, I also respect. [Christianity]

A: I see.

B: I've also joined that church.

A: Oh! Right.

B: I go with Chanthol.

A: Yes.

B: But now, it is hard with all these kids.

A: I see.

B: They are a handful! [Laughs]

A: [Laughs]

B: I haven't gone. I don't have money to get there every time.

A: Yes.

B: When it's time to go, how can I if I'm working? When we don't go to church often, they look for problems with me.

A: Right.

B: They say that it is a day of rest and that I need to take Sunday off, but it is a workday for me, and I can't always take it off. What am I supposed to say to them?

A: [Laughs]

B: It's hard! They tell me to solve it but I can't.

A: Yes.

B: They're always telling me that.

A: Yes.

B: If I stayed home and didn't work, it wouldn't be a problem.

A: Yes.

B: Like Chanthol, the teachers have it easy, but I am under constant supervision.

A: Right.

B: [Inaudible]

A: Yes. And when were you baptized?

B: My baptism—I've forgotten.

A: [Laughs]

B: When I was baptized—

A: It's been a while?

B: It was when Ruet—when Elder Ruet was here.

A: Oh, Elder Ruet.

B: How many months has he been gone now? How many years?

A: He left over a year ago.

B: Uh, that's right, it's been over a year since Elder Ruet was here; since I was baptized.

A: Yes, it's been a while—

B: Does [Elder] Ruet ever call?

A: No, because we were in different areas, we didn't—but I heard he will finish [his mission] soon, this Wednesday or Thursday he will be done as an Elder.

B: After he finishes where will he go?

A: When he finishes, he'll just be normal, like us. He'll work and do normal things, like we do typically.

B: Oh!

A: Yes, so that's all I have for questions! Lastly, I just want to ask if you would give permission—would you give us permission to upload the recording of your interview to Brigham Young University's website? The University is in the United States of America. We have a project to compile the biography of our people.

B: Mhm—

A: Typically, I know that most Cambodian families do not know much about the history of their parents or grandparents, like what they had overcome in the past.

B: Yes.

A: But when we do this, we can record it and put it on the website. So, when the children and grandchildren of the younger generation want to know and listen—for example, if Mony wanted to know his great-grandfather's name, he could type in his name. For example, if I interviewed his mom, then he could search his mom's name and go into the database and look at her article to see his family member's names.

B: That's right.

A: So they want to do the same for this.

B: That's right!

A: So my question is, would you allow us to upload this to that website?

B: Can you say that again?

A: Uh, we are just asking for permission. If you say it's okay, we will upload it.

B: Oh sure, I don't have anything against that.

A: Right! Well, that's all I have for the interview questions.

B: That's right!

A: Because the interview is planned out for us. They don't really want us to interview about anything political, because this project wants us to focus on people's personal histories.

B: That's right, our biographies don't really deal with politics; that's separate.

A: That's right, we aren't involved in that.

B: That's right.

A: [Laughs] So that's it! Thank you for participating. I'll end the interview. Thank you!

B: That's right.

A: I'll turn this off.

*Originally translated by several volunteers, including Jacob Gochnour and Daniel Tuft from 2020 to 2021. Retranslated and edited by Devon Crane and Thomas Barrett in 2024.*