

## Interview of Eav Sareoun

*A: Interviewer: Leng Theory*

*B: Interviewee: Eav Sareoun*

A: Thank you for allowing me to come and interview you today. I am interviewing on March 20, 2019 at your son's house in Lehi, Utah. I'll ask you to please introduce yourself. What is your name?

B: In fact, since a young age, the name that they called me by in the village was Puy Leng. They called me that even up until I went to study—my father changed that name to Leang Eav. Yes.

A: So that means that your official name is Leang Eav.

B: Yes, Leang Eav!

A: But at home they call you Puy Leng.

B: Yes! When I visit my hometown, they only call me by Puy Leng.

A: "Puy Leng, Puy Leng!" right?

B: Puy Leng, yes!

A: And where is your birthplace?

B: I was born in Pursat, in the Ta Sno Commune and in the Bakan district—

A. Kandal province?

B: Pursat Province, the Bakan District, and Ta Sno Commune.

A: Okay! And what year were you born in? Do you remember?

B: I remember the year 1945!

A: Do you remember the day?

B: The day I don't remember very clearly, but maybe I could put it to a date, because—maybe if I keep talking it will come to me. I can't quite remember the name of the date, but—I'm going to say it is January the 15th, 1945.

A: You remember the Khmer Year year?

B: The Khmer Year was Roka [the year of the rooster], and the month was Pisat or Jate [the fifth month of the lunar calendar, corresponding to March–April] Um yeah, Pisat, okay.

A: The month of Pisat?

B: Yes!

A: And your parents. Do you remember your parents' names, and what happened to them? Do you remember?

B: My father's name is Eav Nhia. And my mother, I never knew her name, not until recently

had my aunt told me her name was Seng Chheng. Because she died, I now remember. Yes, I don't know her name for sure, but my aunt said it was Seng Chheng, yes.

A: And what did your parents do?

B: My dad, I don't remember exactly. When I was little, he often worked odd jobs—like, he was inconsistent. He was working—they told me he was working on the border, at Poi Pet but I don't know what he was doing there.

A: But he's a soldier?

B: He wasn't a soldier. He was usually the average farmer.

A: Okay! And your mother?

B: My mother, I don't know even one thing about her. She died when I was three years old. So—

A: Okay! Do you not remember anything with your mom?

B: With my mother, no.

A: Your father? Do you remember any memories or moments with him?

B: Yes! With my dad, just a few moments. He would only visit every once and a while because I was with my grandmother. Yes, and he wasn't with my mother, he would go to work far away. And he—as we know was common in his generation—I do not know—we only met him once every so often, never relying on his support for anything. Only my grandparents supported and raised me.

A: Your grandmother on your mother's side, or your father's side?

B: My grandmother on my mother's—oh! On my father's side.

A: What's her name?

B: Nhem. And I do not know my grandfather's name of my grandmother's husband. Because when I first heard of him, I heard that my grandfather was being transported to a grave in Teuk Chon Province—they took him by boat. But I don't know any more about that, I don't know anything more.

A: Do you have siblings?

B: I'm the only one!

A: Oh! You're an only child.

B: Yes! I'm all alone.

A: As you grew up with your grandmother, what are some things you remember about your grandmother?

B: Okay! My grandmother, she was a very special person. It was as if she knew I had no mother, and she arranged to take me in to live with her. And she was poor, and a hard worker...she worked with burning incense.

A: Burning incense?

B: Incense! Yes, every day, every night until late—up until 12 o'clock. She'd tell how much he saved, and that she was saving it for me. Yes.

A: And how was life at home with your grandmother? Do you remember your home?

B: At home I didn't have anything—like, when I was small, the quality of life was low. We didn't have anything real. I would only be with my grandmother and go and play with them like everything was normal. I was fully dependent on her and my aunty.

A: Oh! Did you have another aunt living with you?

B: There was another one, named Nga.

A: Was she your father's younger or older sister?

B: She was my father's younger sister.

A: And uh—your grandmother—I mean to ask, until how old were you with her before you left home, or—?

B: I was with her until I was about four years old—at that time I don't really remember, maybe four. And when I was with her and my aunt, I was helping to serve them—but not much at the age of four, I could do quite little. At that time, she was a cabbage vendor.

C: Four or six?

B: Four!

C: Four is very small!

B: Four is very small. That's right!

A: How do you still remember?

B: Four is very small, but I remember she planted cabbage and as she would go to the market, sometimes she would pull me along. She would wake up at 4:30, and I would walk with her. I didn't do anything big, but I could do small things with her. That is when I started to have a hard time, starting then, when I was with her.

A: Yes! Then, were you with her until you were grown up, married, etc.?

B: I wasn't grown yet! Until the age of—I've written it down too—the age of, I'm guessing—ah, I've lost it! [He wanted to take his journal to tell the age, but we didn't want to cut off the video.] And after that, I left her. My aunt was selling noodles at the market. And she didn't have people around her. She had the one daughter, but she lacked people, and took me in to be with her. I was at the market with her to go and serve her, watch her daughter and help her sometimes—like washing the noodle dishes for her, washing and working. And after selling the noodles in the morning, she sells in the evenings as well. She had to prepare her noodle soup to sell and would push a cart and sell it in the village. After we did all that, we rested. Then in the morning we did it all again, just the same...every morning...every day. And the house she was staying in was not big. There was only one bed; one bed to sleep in all together. If I am sleeping in it too, we had to fit four people. Four people in a bed like that, it's like sleep doesn't happen. 4 people to a bed... When I slept on that bed I would fall off all the time. Every night I'd fall off the bed.

A: So you would sleep at the end of the bed?

B: I'd fall all the time, fall every day. Yes. I slept on that side 'till one day they placed a mat on the floor for me, and three of them slept on the bed. And a short time later, I remember wanting to go sleep outside instead. At night I would go out and sleep outside, but as we know, in the city—it's very close together. There is plenty of mud and toilet run-off, so there are plenty of mosquitos. It was just mosquitos, and more mosquitos. The mosquitoes would bite me all over my whole body until the landlord saw. They saw that I had too many bites, and they told my aunt. Then I went to sleep with her instead. I went to sleep in that room, but I wasn't sleeping on a bed (like I told you earlier). I slept under the bed and they slept on the bed board above me.

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

B: I was young back then, in between four and six years old.

A: Oh! You were still young.

B: Yes, young!

A: Really young!

B: Yes!

A: And you were in Phnom Penh, right?

B: I was in Pursat, the town of Pursat.

A: Oh, ok. In Pursat.

B: Backing up a bit, talking about my mother who died when I was 3 years old. I knew—through my aunt, she told me that she [my mom] was heavy [pregnant] at that time. And that next pregnancy was close to delivery, but she didn't know what would happen. They say that the whole village and town were infected with cholera, but many people did not believe it was cholera. They believed that—and remember that she hadn't died yet—that day the town Paraded the Spirits [a Chinese festival in which people dress as powerful spirits], do you remember that? They, Paraded the Chinese Spirits for people to go out and look at. The local people believed that her baby died because they went to go see the Chinese Spirit Parade. In fact, the disease causes vomiting, and other symptoms. Cholera was passed from one person to another, and she died. Yes.

A: Even as she was pregnant?

B: Yes! Even with her pregnancy. And—okay.

A: It's ok, we can move on. Now you can talk to me from the part about the market.

B: Yes, yes!

A: I was six years old, already. And after that age, my dad did not what he was doing. He was looking for a job unsuccessfully, and he went back to live with my grandmother, Yay Nhem. A few weeks or a month or so later, he remarried another wife. I did not know how they met. I didn't know, but when he married already, he remembered me—he came to retrieve me from my aunt, back from Phnom Penh—oh! From Pursat [not Phnom Penh], to bring me home to study. They talked with each-other, and I came to stay with my

stepmother, and I also attended Ta Sno school. They called it Ta Sno school from grade 1 to grade 3. And when I lived with them, all I did was study. My stepmother was kind, and I—worked with her, so as to not disappoint her. She used me, my father used me, but I never had any argument and never talked back. I worked all the time. When I would say, I had to go to school, it was no matter. I was considered big enough, about 7 years. I learned that if I studied hard, I would be confident and smart. No matter what, I was already grown—and after school ended and vacation started, when one rests from school, I had to continue—it was not a vacation for me. Since Khmer schools studied from about seven thirty in the morning to eleven, they normally have a break and we have to rest. At two thirty, we go back to school. Between the hours of eleven and two thirty, I often did things with my dad. Sometimes I looked for fish and other things, and then I would go back to school. And when I would come back home at 5pm, I worked a little bit here and there. They would ask me to do anything and everything, so long as when they used me I would not protest. Now, to speak of the days that the school has three months a year, where they have to take a holiday. They call it a vacation. My dad—well as far as the group goes, my dad has no equal in his knowledge of farming. He knows a lot. Yes. And during his month off, he farms in the the rice field near the Tonle Sap. And when I had vacation, I was supposed to go to the rice field to help him. When I helped, first we went out and drove the cart. When he had no food, and it was all gone, I had to walk from our rice field to the far, neighboring field. It was very far from our district. It seemed I walked from our town to our field all the time. It was at least 30 kilometers or 25 kilometers. I walked there in the daytime, through mud, and I walked back, arriving well into the evening. As I went, I carried small things for him, and farmed with him. When he was plowing, I was preparing food and cleaning. When he came from plowing, I would have already cooked rice and food. When he was plowing, if I had extra time, I would go hunting for little crabs and fish to save for later in the evening. When we finished the harvest after the end of the rice season, there was a time they called Fish Season. In fish season, my dad knows how to fish too. We would fish in the Tonle Sap, and when it comes to catching fish, it's difficult! The roads were difficult to travel since we only had two bikes at the time; one for my father, one for me. When going fishing, we had to ride bicycles from our house to another village, called the village of Pteas Stok—from Ta Sno Village to the village Pteas Stok. It's a distance of about 15 kilometers. We had to park our bikes there. To get to the river, we couldn't go farther than the village roads, on bike. They called the land between the village and the river "Prai", "Prai Roniam" or the inundated forest. It is about 15 kilometers more that we had to walk through the forest and carry our belongings until the river. Then, once we'd arrive to the river, it was all overgrown and flooded forest. We had to clear all the underbrush. After clearing the underbrush, we had to build a house, and in the flooded forest were an infinite number of mosquitoes. Mosquitoes in the daytime, and mosquitoes in the evening. We had to build our house on top of the trees. We make it to protect ourselves from animals such as elephants or tigers. We do it to protect the wild animals too. We build houses up high, and we cook rice down below, and then we eat up inside again because there are too many mosquitoes. And when we got fish, my father would catch a lot of fish at a time. A lot of fish. He would take the fish and grill it. Smoke it and grill it. We couldn't take them all home because it was always too much, and we could not grill them all. I was the one responsible for the leftover fish. The leftover fish I had to sell house to house. I had to carry about 15 pounds of fish [about 7.5 kilograms] on each side. I walked across water and across fields, until I arrived at my bike. Once I had

arrived at my bike, I put the fish in the basket behind my bicycle. Then I was riding and selling in the street. If I hadn't sold them all, I brought the fish to my village and sold them there. Once they were all sold, I biked back home and slept in my own house. In the morning, I went out into the forest again, and the fish came 'running'. We fished until the end of Fish season, maybe a period of one month. At the end of the fishing season, there were no more fish.

The Second Section of the Interview Audio:

B: Now, I remember more about my dad. I remember too much, there's too much to say. I could never get to it all. Now, I'll talk about sending me to school once I had finished school at Ta Sno. After the third grade, there was no more schooling. That was it. I had to go to another class at another school, about 15 km away from my home—to the new school. But this school was big—they had from grade 12 to grade level 7. And at each level there were about three classes—ABC, the alphabet was one class. In each class there were a lot of students. When I would go to school—at first, I had a bike. I had to ride a bicycle back and forth, and at one point my bike was so bad that it broke, and I walked the whole way—up and down from my home to school. And I had to carry my food with me too, and I would come home about half an hour late, depending on the weather. If sometimes there was a lot of rain, I would be late and not get home until 6:30 pm. I lived this way up till the 7th grade. All of the schools in Cambodia would take exams to advance to grades 6 and grade 7. I took the tests—yeah! I had passed the 6th grade exams, and we had to go to the market once in the city of Pursat. Then I stayed and went to school there. I did not have any brothers or sisters there, only my aunt—and she was busy working and raising her children. She raised eight or nine children, so I couldn't stay long with them in the city. I had to ask a monk if I could stay with him at the pagoda. In the pagoda, it wasn't that I had to study their religious customs in their university, I just stayed in that place and from there I went to school. When I came home from school, I had to cook rice and stew for myself. And in the pagoda, there is a place—this small place where they would burn wood, and they had stopped using it.

C: Bochha?

B: Bochha! [Also the place where they used to bury corpses.] And there were about 12 people in each Bochha. Row stacked above row—they were up in a row, and I was on the very bottom row. There, in that pagoda, we had a very easy time. We use the state's electricity—the public electricity. We could use it and didn't have to pay money. And among those two rows, I suppose I was studying in the lowest class, So when I didn't know something I could ask the others who were there—so it's like it—it was very easy. I stayed there—until—my parents started to have kids and family live with them. They lived around that pagoda and they were the only Chinese people. Though Chinese, they did their business in the market. I stayed with a brother, at the pagoda. However, he didn't stay with his siblings outside the pagoda, he stayed with me, inside the pagoda. When the exams in the pagoda were over, I would still cook my own food in the Pagoda. When we had no money, or ran out of money—with Cambodia's original currency I suppose—if we had one riel [Cambodian dollar] and if we had no food, we would cut the riel in two. We could split the paper money back in that generation.

A: In what generation?

B: Sihanouk's generation!

A: Oh! What year?

B: Back then—in the year one thousand nine hundred and—

C: Maybe in '69 or '68?

B: No! '69, '68—

C: Because in 1970 it was Lon Nol's generation.

B: Yeah, isn't that— '60—before then, when the money was torn you could still spend it. With a one riel paper, if you only wanted to spend fifty cents of that riel, you could tear it!

A: Tear it?

B: One half of the torn paper, would be equal to 50 cents! And during the time when I would tear my money, it was when I didn't have a single meal. Only when I didn't have any food because food was the most important thing. It was important that we had a grilled fish. Once the fish was grilled, we would gather tamarind leaves and eat fried fish for one or two weeks. When I went to my grandmother, or to my dad, they gave me more tamarind leaves. Sometimes—sometimes I had a little money to buy some soup, and it was 50 cents. They didn't often sell to us until they sold all of their soup for the day. Sometimes it was sold out and they were ready to go home, but sometimes we could buy what was left. And sometimes we were at the pagoda, and the others would say it was such a delicious soup. It had bones and had a little bit of meat. Sometimes the seller would put up a free plate, that we were so happy to eat. It was like that until I got to the 3rd grade. I learned, I studied, tried very hard. I looked to my parents until exams—and the whole country had exams at that time. We went to another province in Battambang for the testing! When I went to the provinces for testing, we were tested for three days. After the three-day exam, I was told that I failed. When I was told I had failed, I felt lost and dejected. They told me that I was lost—that had to stop and do something else. Back then, I was having a long and difficult time, and I didn't know what to do. Some of the young people, they stopped studying and they no longer went to school. and I have the idea: "I am—" Amazingly, I had another idea, that I had studied for so long and I had a hard time for so long that I had to—because if we failed, we can get permission to continue for one more year—now I had to try to study for one more, new year! When I started this new year, it was easy because I had already learned most of it—because I had studied for the whole year beforehand. I made it all the way to the exams for the second time, and I passed! After I had passed, around the level of third grade, we could already work and do some things. I could work for the police or do other fitting things, and we can get a job.

C: 3rd grade, back then, was like 10th grade. 10th grade in high school.

B: What she didn't say was, the school county was run down—run down up through the 12th grade. The 3rd Level [10th grade] we could already understand. Now, I remember, "Oh!" that if I continued, or if I did not continue studying, it didn't matter. I still had a few opportunities for work, but my heart wanted to continue, continue to the 2nd Level [11th Grade] for one more year, and then 1st Level [12th Grade] for another year. I passed the

exams in Battambang for the second time, and was allowed to pass the 1st Level. Yes. After I passed my test, I went to visit my family members who also had testing, and they passed too. There were three of us that took exams and all of us passed. After about two months, or maybe one month—about a month and a half later, the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia was looking for teachers. Each teacher is required to take a teacher's exam. All three of us went to the teachers' exams—and my cousins failed but me and my friend Kok passed. Kok was also a teacher, but he didn't end up going to school with me. He studied with other teachers in Phnom Penh, and I studied at Kontout. Kontout was a school, that was sponsored by the United States of America, during the Nixon era. He donated to support the school and the school was very large. Kontout divided the students into two from approximately 450 students. Even though 450 people passed altogether, they had all come to study to become teachers. For the women, they were grouped into one very big building, and the men were grouped into many other buildings. Yes. And when we came to this place, we were sponsored by United States. We got there and discovered we had bath water. There was a place and water to shower, everything was appropriate and correct. We had a place to go to eat our dinner, though we sometimes had to pay for some of the food! I had to pay some of my own money, but I was not in a difficult position anymore, like before. I had a lot of fun and was happy. My friends and I had enough to travel and go to Phnom Penh, to go to Kep, etc. By the end of the school year, when we had finished our studies, the school would send us to Kep to learn more about what was going on in our country. And when we had finished school, whomever had the best scores, they were allowed to choose their destination. They could choose to go to Phnom Penh or a more suburban area—or wherever they wanted to go. For me, I didn't have a plan to go anywhere specific—they could just send me anywhere. I was happy with what I got. My happiness surpassed my imagination! I did not have a thought, or a plan...no matter where they sent me, I wanted to go. The fun and happiness I had was beyond what I could imagine. They sent me to her area in Thmor Village, the Niak district. [This was the district where his not-yet-wife lived.] They sent me to Svay Chek. Yes. Then it was '69 [1969] when they sent me there. From there, they sent me to Pkoam Hok. To Pkoam from Svay Chek, it was about 10km or 15km, I don't know for sure. Very far! And if the others went [to Pkoam], they would tell me. And they would only wear shorts, no pants. They couldn't wear them because there was too much water and no easy way to get food. One teacher knew about it all—they said—I—that teacher was sent to Svay Chek. I was supposed to go to Pkoam and did not know how or if I could—and my teacher, maybe he didn't have any money or something else, but he ran up to me saying, "Now you want to go to Svay Chek. If you are going to Svay Chek, give me 500\$ and I will help you go to Svay Chek." When I arrived, I thought as much. I knew that investigating and asking around about Svay Chek wasn't a good idea, so I said, "Okay, we are in agreement. We will go to office and you will go to Pkoam." After we arrived in Svay Chek, I rented a house. I rented that house and didn't know the house was on the edge of an embankment. I'm not sure how long I rented without knowing, and I lived with my friend who was also a teacher, and we moved out. After moving out, I went to rent my own house—

C: My dad was there.

B: And he [and his wife] they dragged—they would go to the store, he would drag/pull his

cart every day in front of my house. I saw them every morning. Pushing carts filled with things, to his home. I would go and check out his stuff. I'd walk around his stall. I technically rented his house with him, and he'd ask me if I wanted anything, until I got sick. I fell sick and I stayed home to sleep for about two weeks. After that, I taught again, only to get sick again. After getting sick again, they sent me—oh! I had to go to the Sisophon hospital and—sleep at the Sisophon hospital. After I slept there, I healed just fine, and I went back home to my rented house. When I returned home, I went back to school in Kontout. Well, I did not have any money. I didn't know what to do. I had my brother's, but they were too far and they had never allowed me to borrow money before. But now they let me borrow 8,000 Riels. Back then, 8,000 Riels was a lot of money. I spent a lot of it in school, and when I went to Svay Chek and got sick in the hospital, first I was—oh! Speaking of getting married, they didn't even let me borrow money for that. First of all, I had to—my parents had to set up a date of marriage. And after I got sick, I had to postpone. First, I postponed. Secondly, to the day of the set up—I needed to work on the second task. My father was also like this but—I vomited blood in the hospital. And my younger female cousin, came to my town to help me for about 4 days. She came to help me; to see me. When it was time for her to go back, I would not let her go alone. I brought her home myself—I had to walk out from the lake, I had to cross the swamp and the markets. Maybe others would see me walking with my cousin and think that it was my girlfriend because everyone would cut me off and say that I had other girls—well, I've tried to fix it two times, been hurt twice and told my dad I was getting divorced. Yes. So that's the story—Later, I saw that—I never really talked to her [the wife]. We just talked like siblings talk, but I stole away to tell my father to go ask for her hand in marriage. Yes. One day he came to surprise her parents. Talking to them, it was not difficult or for very long, because Pursat travel is hard, because the road from Sisophon to Svay Rieng only had Long Lofay [motorcars] and taxis—and the road is just dirt. Yes, the road is bumpy and full of potholes. Speaking more on the wedding, we had to set up time to spend together, and then I went and married her. Yes.

A: But did you not say, you would just see her crossing the house every day—?

B: No! I didn't say that. When my dad spoke with them and asked for an engagement, we had never walked with one another. No time to walk together.

A: Until that day?

B: Until that very day! Wherever we went, they would send people to watch me and they'd call it an escort. Yes! Wherever we went.

C: If it wasn't my aunt, it was my sister.

B: No!

A: Oh!

B: And I was sure that I had to respect the customs—I know that our district was isolated, that the district was very remote. 90% of the girls had to respect their parent's wishes, and respect the villagers. If I didn't have a chaperone —

C: They'd shoot you dead! [Laughs]

B: If I went against the village, I'd be in the barracks.

A: And I wonder—if people didn't talk to each other, and just knew each other from seeing one another's faces—how did that make you fall in love with her? Because even though you had seen each other, you only saw her, but you didn't know each other.

B: We did not have the opportunity to talk to each other, but I saw her as beautiful.

A: So then you started to pursue her.

B: Once I was interested in her, I called my dad to come visit.

A: Oh! Good! And um—maybe you could tell us a little bit about your experiences during Pol Pot's era?

B: Yes! Pol Pot's day—they said that I—well my wife already spoke all about that.

A: Yes.

B: Now, I'll tell the stories my wife didn't talk about. The first one is when they sent me to Kork Trab, where I was a group leader. I had to—

A: What province is Kork Trab in?

B: Kork Trab was there in Thmor Village—we were all together in Thmor Village. I was the leader—and what I mean by saying that is I—my point is that I've known a lot about plowing ever since I was a little kid. I used to plow with my dad; actually, anything difficult, I knew how to do really well. They would send me to do all the work, and it became normal for me. I just knew how to do it and I worked hard. I dug and I plowed rice fields. After that—they sent me to another place. They knew I was already a teacher, and I wondered—during the days of Pol Pot, it made me wonder—sometimes someone else would say something wrong towards me. I've always been outspoken, and I don't know why it was like that before Pol Pot's era. When that came to end and Pol Pot's time began—I went to their village and then I did not have anything to say. And I didn't have any clothes—I wore whatever they gave me and I never said anything, because they owned everything and they destroyed everything. It made me want to hope—hope that someday Cambodia would be happy. One day the country would be happy, even though Pol Pot stopped everything. Before they used farming machines and it was happy, but during Pol Pot's time I could only think about how they didn't allow the use of them! I could only think about all the hard work of people trying to be happy. One day I came upon my old teacher, my Professor, in the fields in Pursat. When I saw him, I sobbed saying, "What are you doing here, gathering rice?" He was farming and gathering rice—planting rice, and he told me don't say anything and don't complain. If he just worked hard everything would be okay. Maybe because of that moment, I was never able to say anything. And maybe he's been killed already—they [the soldiers] never kept the workers long. And after being in Bong [another place name] another thing to worry about was rations. We both know that my wife does not eat much, but as for myself, I'd eat anything—even cow skin. Cow skin isn't usually used to make sugar, but they used cow skin to make sugar during that time. When the cow skin becomes decrepit and falls to the ground, they hit and tear it to pieces but not too many. I had to take the cow's skin and then boil it like glue. Then we add vegetables, like water spinach. Usually water spinach grew around the rice fields. We could pick it and mix them together and eat for a meal. At that time, people would eat anything they could find as long as you didn't talk about food! We would visit one another and ask each other what they had to eat. We had to

be careful not to say anything aloud. We had to remember to whisper, whenever talking about food, otherwise it wouldn't happen. Even banana trees or papaya trunks can't be cut without everyone eating. All the way up to eating dog heads. Dog heads! Even just hearing about food—for the villagers—they had more of a need than us, and they would eat everything. They could hide food between them all—hide it from the newcomers. In that village they called—they called us newcomers, and they also said that the old village had military base personnel. The two were different. They said that the soldiers on base had power over us, they can eat anything, hide it, and they had no problems. If we did anything wrong, they reported it to the organization and then that whole village would die. Whenever people came from Phnom Penh, then there was nobody left, everyone would die. And one day, specifically, I was there in Bong and I was called to trample the rice paddy. You know, trampling rice paddies?

A: Yes!

B: I learned to collect the rice because almost all of the cows were dead, and since they didn't have any cows, they called people in to work the cow's work. The cows all caught a disease and died, so they used villagers to do the work in their place. The whole village was collecting rice together. I collected rice too until suddenly, they reported to their superiors about me. The villagers reported me and gave me a job that I had to do that night.

C: Working on the lighting system!

B: I worked on making lights to shine in the middle of a swamp—and whoever could make the lights work—the water was high—

A: Why would they put lights there? In the middle of the lake?

B: I just did what they asked. Their purpose was to kill us and they just—

A: Oh! They just used you.

B: They always used us and we wanted to complain, "How could you use me to do something like that?"

A: Oh, I understand.

B: We installed the lighting system up until about six o'clock in the morning.

A: From night until morning, huh?

B: Until morning, until seven o'clock, when I went home. Well, no matter what, I had to stay alive. Why didn't I say anything, how could the villagers pick me—I didn't do anything, and yet I had this problem. Well, I must tell this story. If I had tried to talk before, they would come and shut me up, and not let me talk. No. If I had dared to say just one word, I would not have survived. At that time, you couldn't! Yes. After that, they sent me to Baray [in Kampong Thom] because they could. Here I am just summarizing. Sending me to Baray was similar to the story about palm trees, from before. Oh! I was forced to tile roofs, and later on they sent for my wife to come live with me. When I was working with tiles, I made friends with the villagers who farmed the rice. They planted the rice, and the husk of the rice is disposed of. In the husk there was sometimes a little bit of rice left.

A: The rice stems.

B: Rice stems! And I had very little time to tile for the people that came. When it came to the tiling levels, I had to set aside time. You can only pick up the leftover rice once. Sometimes I'd get half a can or half of whatever container we had, and cook it, and sometimes I'd bring it to my wife.

B: What would you tile? Would you tile floors? Tile brick kilns?

A: I'd say it was tiling roofs and brick kilns. And after that I—there was a small lake, a small pond in Kien Tral. I would go fishing and catch fish. I'd catch them with my hands, one for each person, and bring them home to eat with my wife, there. And after I tiled for a time—They sent me home to my and my wife's hometown once, to get some things. They used my wife to do something, back then. And when we got there, they made us pull carts. Nowadays, we know that if we were asked to pull carts, they were preparing to kill us somewhere. I drove the cart there, to the village, no problem—until I made the return trip, and in the middle of the road there was a very quiet and empty place. This place had no people, and there was nothing. Just quiet. And the cart I was pulling was broken, in the middle—

C: A broken axle.

B: It's axle was broken, you know the axle?

A: Yes!

B: The axle was broken. And I didn't have a knife or anything whatsoever, no tools at all. Suddenly, when—an unknown old man came from somewhere, I don't know. He was alone, and wore shorts—I don't know—

C: He had a purple shirt.

B: Yeah! He had a shirt and this—I did not know where he came from, but he helped me fix it. I went over a few potholes and looked up and then I don't know where he went! He was gone. Yes. When he had fixed it, I planned to thank him. I'd said thanks, and wanted to give him a little something. But alas, I had lost him! He was gone immediately. Yes! And I pulled the cart home until I had arrived back at Baray. And later, the palm tree workers in the district (palm trees are those trees that are tall) one day—they had to climb the trees. But those trees are the very tallest. They had climbed the lowest ones already, and now they had to climb the tall ones. That day, rather than climb themselves, they made me climb. And from long before I had climbed trees and never had a problem. The palm tree was very tall, Cambodian palm trees always are, and its ladder [these ladders are called Bong Aeng] was tied at the bottom, no problem. But as I was up there, they were shaking, and pushing the ladder. They didn't want it to go well, and the ladder would move—

A: They wanted you to fall?

B: Yes! And at that time I had nothing, so I was very hungry. I had only things like small amounts of sugar, which gave me some energy to function. I was climbing for about two or three days, and would climb forever without a problem. I especially remember the story of when I climbed up a very tall palm tree and I brought down some palm juice and gave it to people. It was amazing, and at that time I hadn't yet noticed, or cared to experience what it was like to help someone who didn't help you back. At that time I hadn't experienced it, up

until these days, when I had come to the United States. I arrived—arrived in the United States, and my sponsor vouched for me. I hadn't known the feeling until my sponsor invited the missionaries to come and talk to me. I—I also remember that in when I came to this country, I didn't know English. I knew some, but not clearly. When I would speak English, others couldn't understand the English I learned in Cambodia. I would speak and they didn't understand at all. And before I came here, the American ambassadors asked, "What is your purpose in coming to the United States? You want to come to the United States." And I told them that I wanted to go to school and continue my studies, especially because I wanted my future children to continue learning a lot, and not have to work as hard as I did. I wanted them to have enough knowledge. Yes! So as to not have as difficult a life as I did. It was. And when I got there, I remember that my sponsor told me I could, so I went to the church—I went to church and I got baptized. I have all the paperwork here, but I don't remember the date. I was baptized after I got baptized—I was called to be a Bishop. I served as Bishop for two years and Bishop—um Cambodia—Bishop, oh branch—branch president for two years. After that we had Laotian, Vietnamese, and Chinese members join together. There were about 300 families, and then some of them broke off, and some of them were too busy, and they didn't come in to church anymore. They left and I also moved to our present day ward—they split into our ward today, now called Ovulie Ward [formerly called the 7th Ward, now called Ovulie Ward]. I've been in the ward up until today. Yes!

A: Okay! Thank you so much for recalling that, perhaps I'll ask the final two questions to finish off the interview.

B: Yes!

A: Um, I wanted to ask you, because you've shared so many difficult experiences. Since the time you were born and up until now, in what memories of your life were you the happiest? Which ones make you the most excited? What are the best things that you can remember from your lifetime? What's good?

B: Yes! Well with me, one of the things I always remember and never forget is that I went to study as a teacher in Kampong Kontout. I remember that place where I was a teacher, because I had so much freedom in those two years. I could do anything. And I'll tell you I had to seven or eight thousand dollars, and I could spend a lot.

A: Pedagogy, did you study Pedagogy?

B: Yes! The teachers of Kampong Kontout district were called pedagogues and studied for two-years. And—

A: What was your age at that time?

B: At that time, it was maybe the year '69— '67, 68 or—yeah '67, '68 and my age was probably—oh, I don't remember how old I was. I know it was about 1968 or 1969. Yes. It's between those years. And second of all, the happiest time was when I came to the United States. That is my life—what more could I do to make it more like I had told the American ambassadors, that I just wanted to be able to do it. Now today my purpose is to continue to do it. And I was especially happy with my church. The church that educated me, educated my family. And if I went to my friends and extended family today, their life would be different. Their lifestyle—sometimes they are richer than me. Some of them are rich—they

have a lot and I don't have much, but I have a fitting amount. I have just enough to support myself, unlike they do—but I can see differences in our families. Before, three of my close friends—all four of us were sponsored. I was sponsored as a teacher, and the second a teacher, and the third a teacher, and of all three teachers, they did not join the church. Well, they joined the church, but they all left the church. And when we look at their families, there isn't much. If we look outside at them, their lives are more difficult than ours. And their attitude or their speech is different from ours. They only talk about wealth, and they talk about themselves. I don't talk about wealth, I talk about my family. I talk about my church. Oh, and one more that I remember especially well, and could never forget. I had a hard life from the age of 4, even up until today. I was always close to dying. The first time was when I was working on the lighting systems. I was supposed to die. And the second was when I was sent to the forest, and all of the others around me were killed. The third time was when I was sent to die falling from the palm trees. I almost died a fourth time when they sent me to carry the rice in my cart, and then that old man helped me fix it when it was broken and I thought myself dead already. How is it that in my life so far, I've been safe and nothing has really bothered me? And that man that helped me, Nowadays I think he was probably an angel, sent to help me when I broke my cart. Well, if I look back, people were only going missing. Losing people—and times where I was happy, where when I was at church and a church member. It helped me, and gave me peace in this place, and that is my desire.

A: Okay! Thank you very much!

B: As for God who—I believe that God has protected me from that point forward. I believe that He had a plan for me from the time I was little, and that it will live on forever. And I will say, again and again—the thing is that all of those times I should have died, no matter what happens I just held on. No matter what happened, I had to return to my wife in Svay Chek. That faith was beyond belief. So, thank you for asking me questions, and I appreciate the time that you have spent interviewing us both. Yes! Thank you!

A: Yes!

C: [His Wife] I want to add a little bit.

A: Yes!

C: After I was baptized—I immediately thought that, back when I was in Cambodia—the Lord, Jesus Christ, He took care of me and my family. He was there, and Jesus, he gave help to me.

B: Oh no, do you think my eyes look puffy?

C: Oh! I forgot to mention—

B: Oh! My eyes swell because when the soldiers arranged for me to go to my hometown, they persuaded me to go and my family they prayed that I wouldn't come. My eyes were this swollen, and then I couldn't come home. Others would come back home, they could go to their homes, but they changed my plan because I had swollen eyes for 3 days. They said it was because I was sick. All the others that were sent to their districts, they were all killed. And in the village I was in, everyone except people relocated to Phnom Penh, they were all dead. Some of them dies due to disease, like the cows died. Cows were dead all over the

place, and they buried them. But people, they were so hungry that they dug up the sick cows and ate them. Even if they only ate enough to fill them for one meal, the next day they were dead. Even though it was vicious, the people would still try to eat it. I would take the dead, one by one, and try to touch them as little as possible; but I was cut. That night I started cramping. I would cramp and cramp, and I told them to go to this place—they got me Khmer medicine. A medicine paste that I would take and rub into my wound until, 3 days later, I was better. Even though it was little like this, the wound was really aggressive.

A: Okay! Thank you so much for allowing me to come and interview you today.