

# Interview of Ang Bunthy

**A: Interviewer: Nhem Sokunthea**

**B: Interviewee: Ang Bunthy**

## Summary of the Interview

*Ang Bunthy was born in 1980 in Chak Angrae Kraom, in the capital of Phnom Penh, near the border of Kandal province. In addition to sharing her family history and childhood memories, she briefly reflects on living in the Thai camps and how the Khmer Rouge impacted her family. She now works in the administration department of an international school in Phnom Penh and concludes her interview by sharing some of her hopes for her future.*

A: Okay, first of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me to interview you about your life. My name is Nhem Sokunthea, your interviewer today. So, what is your full name?

B: Alright, my name is Ang Bunthy.

A: Today I am interviewing you on August 27, 2016. This interview was organized by a university in the United States named BYU. This university has a program organized for interviewing you and the Cambodian people about their history and lives for the future, so your children and the future generations will know of your life and its stories, as well as the lives of your ancestors. So, do you allow me to post this interview on the BYU website?

B: Yes, sure.

A: Yes, the website is called [www.cambodianoralthistoryproject.byu.edu](http://www.cambodianoralthistoryproject.byu.edu), and now I would like to begin the interview. So, would you please tell me your full name again?

B: Yeah, my name is Ang Bunthy.

A: And do you have any nicknames?

B: They call me Bunthy.

A: Bunthy, huh? That's it?

B: That's it.

A: Say, as a kid, did your mom call you by anything else?

B: Um—sometimes my dad called me Chanthou.

A: Chanthou, huh?

B: But it wasn't a nickname.

A: Right, so, when were you born?

B: I was born on September 1, 1980.

A: Where were you born?

B: Yeah, in Phnom Penh.

A: Which village and commune are you from?

B: Village and commune?

A: Yeah!

B: Okay, I was born on September 1, 1980, in the Chak Angre Kraom village, Phnom Penh.

A: Yes, Cambodia, right?

B: Yes, Cambodia.

A: Right, so according to the Khmer lunar calendar, what year were you born in—what animal?

B: The monkey.

A: Year of the monkey?

B: Yes, the monkey.

A: Right, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

B: Yeah, I have three sisters and two brothers, there were six of us in total.

A: Okay, they're all still alive, right?

B: Um—one of my younger brothers died.

A: Okay.

B: Traffic accident in 2010.

A: Right.

B: So, I only have one younger brother and my three younger sisters.

A: Right, so, do you live near each other, or have you all separated?

B: Um—two of my siblings, the third and the fourth, are married. They are in America.

A: Right!

B: They have their own family.

A: Okay, and your other siblings live together?

B: The other two live together with our parents.

A: Right!

B: That's all five of them.

A: Well then, let's go back to your father. What is your father's name?

B: My father's name is Ang Bunlay.

A: When was he born?

B: He was born on February 16, 1999.

A: Right, '99— '59, right?

B: Uh— '59.

A: 1959.

B: 1959.

A: So, where was your father born?

B: He was born in Nora village, Chbar Ampov commune, Kandal province, Cambodia.

A: Right, so, do you remember what Khmer Lunar cycle animal your father was born under?

B: What was it—the pig.

A: Pig?

B: Right, pig.

A: That's right, he was born in the year of the pig.

B: Pig.

A: So, do you remember any memories with your dad? Your dad, what kind of person is he?

B: Most important, he is a steadfast and firm person, he likes to say it as it is, straightforward. Speaking with him, he's kind, he can be strict, but his heart is good.

A: Right, rigid and firm in principle, right—?

B: He is very serious in his speech.

A: And do you have any other good memories with him?

B: Sometimes we do, like as part of a church, we had family night together, we hang out together, we have a lot of memories.

A: I went too.

B: That's right, all of us.

A: Okay, now onto your mother, what is your mother's name?

B: Uh, my mom's name is Sim Sitha.

A: Right!

B: She was born on May 1, 1960.

A: Where?

B: In Koh Anlong Chen village, Svay Rolum commune, Saang district, Kandal province.

A: Right, so, what Khmer Lunar cycle animal was your mother born under?

B: My mom was the year of the pig.

A: And your dad?

B: The year of the rat.

A: Ok, the year of the mouse. So, what are some memories you have with your mother, can

you tell us?

B: Yeah, so, she gave birth to me, she was the provider and we always had to help her.

A: Right!

B: So, we had to learn how to provide like her.

A: Right!

B: So, she went through a lot of hardships, she was very self-reliant.

A: Yes!

B: Working hard—

A: So, how was everything else?

B: Really, there are a lot of memories, good and bad, with her.

A: Your whole life, huh?

B: My entire life.

A: Right, so, for your maternal grandparents, what were their names?

B: My grandma, her name is Sin Sitha.

A: My grandma?

B: My grandma's name is Muong Poy.

A: Right!

B: Muong Poy.

A: So, when is your grandmother's birthday?

B: She was born on August 10, 1942.

A: Where was she born?

B: In Kantuot village, Khtos commune, Sangke district, Battambang province.

A: Hmm, right, so, is your maternal grandmother still alive?

B: On my mother's side, she is the only one still alive.

A: Right!

B: As for my grandfather, he has already died.

A: Right, so, do you have any memories with your grandma?

B: Uh—yeah, she used to come and help watch us when we were little.

A: Right!

B: Honestly, my mom is far away, far away from her.

A: I see.

B: She wasn't really close at all.

A: I see.

B: Because my mom is still doing business in the refugee camp and wherever. We only have a few memories with her.

A: So, what about your grandfather, what was his name?

B: Grandpa's name is Sin Sim.

A: I see.

B: Yeah, Sin Sim.

A: His date of birth and place of birth?

B: He was born on June 18, 1940.

A: At?

B: In Koh Anlong Chen village, Svay Rolum commune, Saang district, Kandal province.

A: Is that nearby?

B: It's pretty close to here; it's a half hour ride to get there.

A: Yes, do you remember your grandmother's Khmer birthyear? In what animal year was she born?

B: The Khmer year animal? 1942.

A: Do you know the year for your grandfather?

B: I don't know, I don't remember the year.

A: Okay, that's alright.

B: I don't know the animals.

A: So you were born soon enough to meet him?

B: No.

A: And did your mom ever tell you stuff, uh, about what kind of person he was?

B: Er—like, I used to hear Mom say that Grandpa was a gentle person who loved his family. He worked hard, so he was an educated person at that time.

A: I see.

B: He, when he died, they took him and threw him away.

A: During the Pol Pot era?

B: That's right. I heard my mom say that, but we don't know what really happened, I've just heard mom say that.

A: That's terrible.

B: In that previous generation, if someone was educated they wouldn't keep them around.

A: So your grandpa, he had a big job?

B: Yes.

A: I see. Okay, let's start into your ancestors on your father's side for a change.

B: Start on my father's side instead?

A: Yes, that's right. Your paternal grandparents, what was your grandfather's name?

B: Grandpa's name was Noev Ang.

A: And his date of birth?

B: The date he was born, January 21, 1921.

A: At?

B: In Moat Srah village, Sarika Keo commune, Lvea Em district, Kandal province.

A: Hey—there is another from Sarika Keo commune—

B: I've only heard, I'm not certain. I've just heard it from what others have said.

A: I see. So, were you born in time to meet your grandfather?

B: No.

A: And has your dad ever told you about what kind of person he was?

B: He only said that he was a farmer. My dad's father wasn't an educated person or anything great, but he did want my dad to learn to high grades.

A: I see. So now, what about your grandmother?

B: Grandmother was named Sok Nai.

A: I see.

B: She was born on January 1, 1911.

A: I see.

B: In Kampong Sneh village, have you ever heard of Kampong Sneh?

A: No.

B: Cheu Keach commune, Ba Phnom District, Prey Veng province.

A: I see. All in Kampong Sneh village.

B: In Kampong Sneh village, I've heard, but I've never gone there.

A: I see. Okay, so were you born in time to meet your grandmother?

B: No.

A: And do you know what animal your grandparents were born under in the Khmer Lunar cycle?

B: I don't remember.

A: You don't remember. Have you ever heard your father describe your grandmother?

B: Uh—yes, a person who is strict but good-hearted. She uh—honestly speaking, she wasn't

a bad person, she just spoke very straightforward but had a good heart.

A: Right.

B: She was as strict as Dad.

A: Alright, so, your grandparents on both sides, did they ever travel outside the country?

B: Never, they only ever lived in Cambodia.

A: Right—what about refugee camps?

B: Only my mother and father.

A: But did they ever go to Thailand?

B: Uh, actually, speaking of which, they've been to Khao Dang near Thailand.

A: Near Thailand?

B: Yes!

A: Do you remember what those camps were like?

B: At the camp it was called UN—UNICEF, so they help the Cambodian people there.

A: Right!

B: Like, they helped give us rice, give us water, they have a program there, even if you weren't someone with work, they would make sure you didn't go hungry and, if you are someone who knows how to work, they will help your family to grow.

A: Right!

B: But if you were someone who didn't want to work, you won't go hungry because they had set up a program to give out rice.

A: In what generation when you were in the camp?

B: Uh, in the late 1900s.

A: About when in the 1900s?

B: 1990.

A: The 90s, huh?

B: Yeah, my mom left from here in 1970.

A: Right!

B: Ever since [...] broke up, she has been there ever since.

A: Alright.

B: We returned in 1993.

A: That's it, you've been here ever since.

B: Yes!

A: So, onto your education, what grade did you study up to? What school?

B: To be honest, I did not receive a higher education like others. I only learned some various skills.

A: What about studying in the first, second, or third grade?

B: We only studied up to fifth or sixth grade.

A: Right!

B: Because of family problems at that time. All I did was pick a skill.

A: What do you do?

B: Basic skills, learning any skills we can to find work to do.

A: Right, that's really good, so where do you go to primary school?

B: I studied in Chak Angre, Village Three.

A: Village Three?

B: Yes.

A: So, when you were learning your dream, such as starting a career in luggage or short training courses, what are your dreams for the future, what do you want to do?

B: Er—reality, dream, reality, I really want to have business.

A: Yes!

B: I want to have my own business.

A: That's it!

B: But what I am now—I have achieved this effort, I have a good job to do.

A: Yes!

B: In the future, I just want to be a businesswoman, ha.

A: Yes, very good.

B: Want to have a business of my own.

A: Yes, so you, like your family, used to farm?

B: Speaking of that—on my father's side, they used to farm.

A: Right, and did his relatives ever plant anything?

B: Yes he planted seeds.

A: That's right, that's normal

B: Yes, life as a farmer on my father's side.

A: That's right, okay, brother Ty, what about in your life? What is the comparison of life—from the past to the present, how do you think your life is different?

B: Er—normally, our lives happen and are not the same.

A: That's right!

B: If I was still little, I would face a lot of difficulties in life. But what is important, we endure, we study hard, even if we do not have a degree like others, we can still find skills, even just a little, ha to help ourselves.

A: Yes.

B: Causing us to grow.

A: That's right!

B: So we see that when we endure, it allows our lives have a potential in the future.

A: Well, then you go back to your passion, okay, because you are single, right?

B: Single.

A: So, the problem in my family has not been asked about yet?

B: That's right, being single for a little while allows me to enjoy life.

A: Do not wait too long, okay, sister, so what kind of food do you like to eat?

B: I would say, I like Khmer food.

A: What food is the most special?

B: I especially like the water spinach soup.

A: Really?

B: Or Vietnamese soup, that's right I like that sour soup.

A: It's delicious, and do you like to eat a lot of peppers?

B: And I like a lot of peppers, I use peppers to make it spicy, when there are no peppers, it is very difficult for me.

A: It isn't as flavorful?

B: That's right, when I eat hot sour soup with no peppers, it feels like something is missing, so put peppers with fish sauce.

A: That's right!

B: Delicious combination of ingredients makes us want to eat.

A: Okay, do you know how to cook?

B: I know how to some like stir fry, deep frying, boiling food, that type of stuff.

A: That's right!

B: It's normal.

A: So when you learn, who did you learn from?

B: Mother. My mother she was skilled in making food. She knew how to make every type of food. But I am not so skilled, I like to eat more.

A: You speak as if you don't cook.

B: I can cook, but only a little bit.

A: That's right! So what do you do during your free time? Like what do you like to do, more than anything, when you have free time from your job?

B: Sometimes, I like to walk to a friend's house, and we convince each other to go places, and sometimes we go fishing or read books together.

A: That's right!

B: Sometimes sightseeing.

A: Do you sing karaoke?

B: I really like to sing karaoke, and I also like traveling.

A: Okay, so where do you like to go, what is your favorite place to go?

B: Especially the mountains, any place that is unique to see the beautiful scenery and waterfalls.

A: Have you ever been to Chambok?

B: I have been before.

A: It's very fun to walk in.

B: That's right, the scenery is beautiful.

A: So, what kind of popular game do you like to play the most during festivals?

B: I especially like to play, what they call it throwing game, throwing, they call it.

A: The pants are swollen, that game?

B: That's right!

A: That's right!

B: It's fun, it's getting a lot of attention.

A: Yes, so what kind of song do you like to listen to the most?

B: The songs I like to listen to are the romantic ones.

A: That's it, do you like to listen to music a lot?

B: Er—speaking of, I like to be sweet, I like everything, just what is important, I like romantic songs, simple chills from time to time.

A: Yes, yes, do you know how to sing?

B: Yes, just it's not pretty.

A: It's not your career, right?

B: Not a career, but singing and playing with friends, going to karaoke from time to time so that my friends can listen.

A: Okay, so you know how to play a musical instrument?

B: Oh, I don't know how to play, just [...].

A: Do any of your brothers or sisters know how to play?

B: No!

A: Not at all, huh?

B: Hmm—my little sister knows how to play the piano.

A: Oh—sister Ri.

B: Ri and Tiara.

A: So you are like your life, you were born at the end of the war, right 1980?

B: That's right!

A: So, have you ever heard anything about the history of the war that your parents used to talk about? Can you describe what your mother told you about?

B: I used to hear my parents say, er—in that generation, the family was separated, the children lived with the children, the old people stayed with the old people.

A: That's right!

B: So we met once in a while, then in that generation we could not eat enough to get full. They just give us porridge, they give us something, one spoonful at a time just like that, just when you hear about it it's so sad.

A: That's right!

B: He speaks but he doesn't give us freedom, they cause us work forever, that's it.

A: That's write, so then, like your parents, did they enter in that generation, right?

B: Yes, they entered in that generation. We just only overheard what he said, ha.

A: That's right, so at that time was he still in the camp or what?

B: Er, in that generation, he also went through it. My mother also went through that generation to get full, and sometimes she stole food a little bit of rice for her younger siblings.

A: Yes.

B: When they were arrested, they found out, they took us to be “reeducated.” That meant they were taking us to be killed.

A: That's right!

B: Because that generation was tough.

A: Yes, that's right.

B: And it is difficult.

A: And what about the aunt's relatives, how are they doing?

B: Like my grandmother's siblings on my dad's side, or on my mom's side, some of them passed away.

A: Yes.

B: Yes, he died because of lack of food. He became very sick.

A: Yes.

B: He had a great shortage.

A: That's right!

B: The story is too long.

A: Well, do you know her relatives from the Pol Pot era? Does she have siblings?

B: She spoke of having ten siblings. Now, only five or six left.

A: Did they die in that generation?

B: Yes, a lot of death.

A: In that generation?

B: Yes, in that generation.

A: I see.

B: First because of illness, second because of lack of food. They could not endure it.

A: They could not endure it?

B: Yes, endure.

A: Well, how did you feel when your mother and father and escaped from that era?

B: How did I feel huh? The odds of disaster were a thousand to one, isn't that what they say?

A: That's right!

B: She said that she was lucky.

A: Lucky.

B: That she still has her life.

A: Yes.

B: What she saw in that time, when she told us, was a lot of injustice.

A: That's right!

B: If we were born in that generation, then we wouldn't know what was going on.

A: I see. Have you ever gone a day without food?

B: I have before.

A: And how did you feel?

B: Very hard to endure.

A: You had to bide your time through each day.

B: That means thin, thin, thin.

A: I think that would be very difficult, yes?

B: It's hard to even think about!

A: I see.

B: But it is alright otherwise. She still has her life, and she has the opportunity to tell us about her experiences from before.

A: Okay. So, examining your life, what do you remember most about your life?

B: What I remember most is that when we face difficult times, whether we become rich or have a better life, we will never forget those times.

A: I see, what about your difficult times?

B: In difficult times, there are many obstacles. First, we do not have much, sometimes we do not have enough to eat and stuff like that. In that moment we know about those circumstances, so we must think about others when they are lacking. We know generosity, so we help them.

A: It's very difficult, isn't it?

B: That's right!

A: So you are not married yet.

B: Right!

A: So, please tell me your dreams for the future. What kind of husband would you like to have? And, planning for days in the future, how do you want to teach and raise your children?

B: And for me, I am a member of the Church, that's the kind of family I want. I want a family that understands each other, and a husband that is responsible. That means that when he becomes a father, he has to take responsibility for his kids and his wife and children. So, I want to get married in the holy temple, that is my dream.

A: Very cool, hey?

B: Yes, I want to have a sealed family. I do not want to get married and get divorced. So we see in life nowadays, some families are married and divorced. It is difficult for children to be brought up that way.

A: Right.

B: Well, I don't want that because I have been there for a long time; because I choose to see the facts. I don't want that, I want to have someone to become a member who can take me to the temple to be sealed and have my family live together forever.

A: Right!

B: That is what I aspire to in life.

A: I feel the same way.

B: But I hope that one day God will prepare the way for me despite the fact that sometimes I feel that it is taking a long time, but it's not a problem. Because God has already prepared

for us, what is important is that we have to help ourselves as well.

A: Right. So, what do you do to earn living?

B: Right now I work at an international school.

A: I see.

B: So, I'm in—what department? They call it the administration department. To be honest, I love my job.

A: Yes, so what do you think is the value of education in your life?

B: Speaking of the value of education, it is very important to us because it makes us people that they call ethical within ourselves and we have great knowledge. We can think and see that when we don't have knowledge for ourselves, it is different from people that are poor. Knowledge within ourselves, it's so important that we maintain it, all of us.

A: I agree. Yeah, so, what do you do so that your family can have happiness?

B: First off, we have to know how to understand—to understand and be unified with each other. Secondly, we have to understand and be forgiving towards each other. Really, they're just the same thing. Honestly, we need to love each other within our family.

A: Right.

B: Because we know already that our families are like a dish in a drying rack, right? So at times our words are a bit spiteful; we need to know how to be patient.

A: Right.

B: That is really important.

A: Of course. So, this is another question, what, from your life experiences, good things do you want to share for your posterity in the next generations?

B: For me, I just want to share to my children and future generations and guide them to have knowledge and receive lots of education, even if they don't have lots of education. But, er—the part about education is important.

A: Right.

B: For them to have a long and bright future.

A: Right.

B: So they can have opportunities to work in good jobs like other people.

A: I see.

B: And so we aren't in too much difficulty when they have knowledge, so they can have good jobs. I am happy that they will have a good future.

A: Yes, of course.

B: So what is important is that parents are the ones who educate them from the time they are small.

A: Right, of course. So, this is another and final question. What advice do you have that you

want to give your posterity, and also what kind of path would you want them to take, and which would you recommend that they avoid?

B: Uh, what is important for me is that I am a member of the Church, I want for them from the time they are born, I want them to live in the Gospel. So firstly, from their birth they can learn in primary so they can learn from the time they are little so that when they are older in each stage of life they will learn and understand. It isn't hard to raise them so that they know for themselves.

A: What path should they walk then?

B: They should walk whichever path, what is important is that we have God to help us.

A: Right.

B: Why? Because society now is very hard for the younger generation nowadays.

A: I see.

B: If they don't have the Holy Spirit they will make friends with people on the fringe, become addicted to drugs and other things, but for us, we are members of the Church. Each of us can educate them from the time they are little, from the time they are born.

A: Right.

B: From the time they are little till they are grown they can walk the right path.

A: Of course!

B: Yes.

A: So, thank you so much Ms. Thy, for this interview today. All your children in future generations—when they are born—will be able to listen to your words and advice, like the history of your life.

B: Yes.

A: So thank you so much.

B: Yes, thank you so much for your time.

A: Of course.

*Interview translated by Elijah Harmon.*