

Newinn:

But you leave Saturday morning or - yeah.

Interviewer:

Well, good morning. Today is the 4th of April, 2019, and I'm here shooting with the West Point Center for Oral History on location in Houston, Texas at the Counterparts Reunion, and I am here with Mr. Henry Newinn or his Vietnamese name Hung Nguyen. That is correct?

Newinn:

That is correct. Yes, sir.

Interviewer:

Sir, I'm so glad you're here. Uh, can you please spell, uh, both your American last name and your Vietnamese last name for the transcriber?

Newinn:

Yes. My, uh, prior name, original name, Hung Nguyen, and the reason I, uh, want to pronounce American style, uh, Henry. I change to Henry Newinn.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Very good. Now you were born in 1943 in Quảng Ngãi Province, correct?

Newinn:

Yes, yes, yeah.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about, um, about what your-your hometown is like.

Newinn:

Well, actually, um, during the French War in Vietnam, Indochina War in Vietnam, my family come from north, move to the south.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And they moved somewhere in - around Da Nang, uh, and then, uh, they moved to South, uh, maybe 100 miles, 200 miles from Da Nang and then I was born in Quảng Ngãi and never be there, only a few months. They, uh, moved back to, uh, Da Nang where the most French troops locate. So we on the, uh, free world side, 'cause after that Vietnamese occupy.

Interviewer:

Okay. Um, so, uh, what was your interaction with - do you remember French soldiers in the country when you were a boy?

Newinn:

Sure, I do remember everything. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay. You said you even remembered Japanese soldiers being there.

Newinn:

Yeah, when I was little. So, wartime and my family get - 'cause I run to hide everywhere in the - far away from the town where they fight [INDISTINCT], and they - I thought Japanese looked nice. They, uh, gave me some, uh, soup. I said, 'Wow, uh, [INDISTINCT]. I said [INDISTINCT], but all my family, uh, my brother, older brother or sister know more than that and they told me about they saw them climb, uh, telephone, uh, pole, cut the wire, French telephone wire and they cut it and get shot or SOMETHING, but I [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

After that war and then the French, uh, re-reoccupied, uh, Vietnam, they bring a lot of troops from North Africa, like Tunisia, ANSARI, um, Moroccan and, uh, German, uh, volunteer after the second World War back to-to French legionnaires from overseas in for the French.

Interviewer:

Okay, so you saw, uh, French soldiers from Tunisia, uh, Morocco, Algeria?

Newinn:

Algeria and, uh, Senegalese. [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Okay. And, uh, and then German soldiers.

Newinn:

And German - um, mostly German. About 90 percent German.

Interviewer:

Really?

Newinn:

We call them Foreign Legion.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Legionnaires, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. Did you - uh, as a boy, did you interact with any of these?

Newinn:

Sure, yeah.

Interviewer:

Tell -

Newinn:

Because my family, uh, uh, mostly do what to them like, uh, open a mess hall or-or a little restaurant, so they all come. So I learned a lot of language from them, all kinds of language from North Africa to French, German. Little bit. It was mostly not nice language. [Laughs] You know, theyâ€™re soldiers.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

So, I could communicate, say a few, little words and theyâ€™re all happy, so I communicate with them through theâ€¦

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And, um, song and something like that.

Interviewer:

And-and so your family ran kind of a restaurant.

Newinn:

Right.

Interviewer:

Okay. And, uh, and so you-you would see these foreign soldiers every day.

Newinn:

Every day, yeah, and I serve like a, uh, pull the-the fan. You know, in that day we donâ€™t have electric fan and this one THING, [makes pulling sound]. I just pulled it.

Interviewer:

Okay, so you have a cord and you had toâ€¦

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright.

Newinn:

So I learned - uh, see a lot of war, you know, during my lifetime, yeah, myâ€¦

Interviewer:

Sure. Did you, um - did those foreign soldiers treat you pretty well?

Newinn:

The soldiers treat very nice, yeah, very nice, very nice. And of course, uh, I-I remember sometimes in May they have a big holiday for legionnaire. Every house have to close the door because they have free to walk on the street, do anything they want to celebrate their - I donâ€™t know what. A month for legionnaire or monthâ€¦

Interviewer:

Okay. And you said you saw fighting as a boy.

Newinn:

Yes. As a, um, probably four years old.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

My father, uh, hold me on his neck and carry into the - run to the - to the hiding in the bush because they fight the German - not German soldiers, but the French Legion and they say, â€œHold that man, hold that man!â€ And my father crawl up, you know, because I-I cry because I get hurt. Iâ€™m not afraid of the gun but Iâ€™m afraid of cactus. He stick me. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Oh, yeah?

Newinn:

Yeah, he holding me under the cactus. I just screamed. So a German guy almost shoot.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Newinn:

But, uh, lucky he see a little kid and, I donâ€™t know, my [INDISTINCT] and, umâ€¦

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah. So we receive a lot of hardship from that second World War up to French War and then American War, uh, continue.

Interviewer:

Right. Uh, a long history of war.

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah, the whole-whole life.

Interviewer:

So, letâ€™s see. You wouldâ€™ve been 11 when the country split.

Newinn:

Nearby. Some-something like this.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about 1954 when Vietnam divided. What-what did you think about at that time?

Newinn:

Actually, at that time, uh, uh, we stay in Da Nang with the big town of the French because thatâ€™s more secure. The French headquarter was a troop or-or admin office located there, so a nice building built and my family have a house there and little, uh, restaurant. So when they divided, of course my family is ready to move, and then my other family still in the north tried to get back inside. It was a big problem, like, um, uh, a lot of e-evacuation people relocate to the south and-and I saw the French troop try to move out.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

But, uh, during the second World War my family in the north tried to follow us to move to the south and, uh, they go by ship, by sampan, by boat from the north, but the ally, uh, probably English, just they bombed. My whole family died on the boat moving south during the Geneva agreement peace talk, P-Paris Agreement.

Interviewer:

Okay. So part of your family died as they were trying toâ€¦

Newinn:

Move from the north to the south.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

By the ally armed force because they think maybe Japanese boat. They didnâ€™t recognize who they [INDISTINCT] die.

Interviewer:

Okay. Alright. And so when-when refugees came from the north, um, did-did, uh, you all welcome them into the - into South Vietnam?

Newinn:

Uh, most of them, uh, depend on the government. They say, â€œOkay, what kind of work? Are you, uh, from northwest province? You locate near the-the coastal, like you do fishing,â€ and they relocate them fishing near the beach. Some other depend on where they live, uh, up there, you know, demographics. So if they live near [INDISTINCT], and we were curious. We see them coming. They speak Vietnamese but a north accent, and at that time - I learned that most of them Catholic. They MOVED to Catholic and they lived by group and we young kids, we welcome. But, uh, local NORTHERN, I have no idea if they conflict or not because different, uh, but still same language, same people. But, uh, they may - should integrate, communicate, you know, most - but most of them, yeah, from the north and they welcomed them in town in the south, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. What did your parents do, um, besides run the - a restaurant? Is-is that their main occupation?

Newinn:

And then, uh, my father died when I was about eight years old and my mother still run the restaurant and, um, I help her to, uh, to roast coffee and sit and roast or by the - or-or pull the fan. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

So youâ€™re doing - either doing the fan or roasting the coffee.

Newinn:

Roasting coffee. And, uh, sometimes some drunk French troops didnâ€™t pay. She asked me to go call MP but I scared to go, to walk myself to MP post, so something like that the whole family cry â€˜cause, uh, we donâ€™t have anybody to protect us, you know? My dad had died already.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

And my sisters big but theyâ€™re married, so something like that.

Interviewer:

Okay. How-how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Newinn:

I have, uh, seven. Iâ€™m the youngest one.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

But all my, uh, sisters all grow and they-they married. They live different place, you know, so I just follow my mom in the restaurant.

Interviewer:

Okay. Alright. Umâ€¦

Newinn:

So the reason why I EXPOSED with the foreign troops, so I get along well with American troops.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

After the French left, American come. I say, â€œHello. Chocolate, candy,â€ something.

Interviewer:

Sure. So what was it like when the French left?

Newinn:

The French left, um, and then American troops over. Uh, they did not send, um, the troops. They just sent advisor. Very nice. Tried to help us with anything like, uh, um, food, a bridge, irrigation, and, umâ€¦and we all Vietnamese look at them as a, oh, they big, they tall than French, but itâ€™s not - uh, they not nice. I say, â€œWhat do you mean theyâ€™re not nice?â€ Because when they drink, uh, beer, you know, they all - or they eat, they clean up the dish and they drink beer and a half bottle they take with them, but French always leave behind. Or eat, you leave the food in the - for example, eat a steak and you STEAL some [INDISTINCT] there, but Americans eat all. Theyâ€™re practical.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

You donâ€™t waste or take with you, but the French always leave BACK.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Thatâ€™s all they - they say, â€œOh, American big, tall, rich, but theyâ€™re not good.â€ [Laughs] So what - are you practical? I mean, oh, you donâ€™t finish you can take with you, but French they - oh, they donâ€™t do that. They leave behind to show that lâ€™m not so hungry. Why you eat to clean off the DISH?

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Thatâ€™s a way Vietnamese thought at that time.

Interviewer:

Thatâ€™s interesting.

Newinn:

Yeah, we would talk about that and they believe - they agree. They sayâ€¦

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Okay, for example, you eat the spaghetti; you still leave some sauce or some crumb or-or some meatball, one meatball, but not [INDISTINCT]. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

But the French always leave that and [INDISTINCT] hungry. Americans, they clean for you.

Interviewer:

They do everything.

Newinn:

Right. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay. I see.

Newinn:

Thatâ€™s the way - yeah, thatâ€™s - that about â€™54, â€™55, â€™56.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

No speaking of English at all.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Speak French.

Interviewer:

And so, um, by the time a lot of the Americans started coming in - uh, when, around the 1960â€™s, early â€™60s?

Newinn:

â€™55 - â€™54, â€™55.

Interviewer:

Okay. So youâ€™re starting to see Americans show up then.

Newinn:

Right, right. And theyâ€™re nice. They want to teach English to the young students like I am and, uh, very nice.

Interviewer:

Yeah. What kind of interactions did you have with Americans back then?

Newinn:

Uh, first of all they surprised to see that the Americans are so big, nice, uh, gentlemen and, uhâ€¦just welcome. Thatâ€™s it. Yeah. And then it changed later on, the-the-the aspect, the-the way they look. They mess up later.

Interviewer:

How did it change?

Newinn:

Oh, about the more - the war increase. We donâ€™t know the politician decide increase or what, and then little, uh, contact and they GIVE to the villages, to the hamlet level. People begin, you know, not stay away. The government tried to bring them back, so American help them bring them back. But it was the war so people get tired.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

So and the other side, the VC Viet Cong communities take advantage, exploit and say, â€œThese-these American destroy.â€ Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Did you know any Viet Cong?

Newinn:

If I know [laughs] - it-it-it - I showed them [INDISTINCT]. Yeah, not any Viet Cong at all.

Interviewer:

Okay. Um, when did you start working with the Americans?

Newinn:

Oh, working with American about, uh, â€™65 - uh, â€™68, â€™68, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

But before that on and off. But, uh, during that, uh - yeah.

Interviewer:

So you wouldâ€™ve been about 25.

Newinn:

Yeah.

At about that time.

Newinn:

Right.

Interviewer:

Okay. What did you do, uh - did you finish high school?

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Did you - whatâ€™d you do after finishing high school?

Newinn:

After high school just on and off, uh, help my family run the, uh, restaurant, my sister, yeah, and sometimes, uh, uh, just go out there and, uh - we had a job like, uh, interpretation - doing interpreting for some American, uh, unit, like that yeah, but a few months on and off.

Interviewer:

Okay. What was it like being an interpreter for Americans?

Newinn:

Uh, like, umâ€|uh, sometimes like, uh, in the field, uh, special forces for a couple months. Yeah, something for training or something like that.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

As they train the troops.

Interviewer:

Okay. Uh, so you were, uh, an interpreter when Americans were training with, uh, some of the Vietnamese units.

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

And, uh, umâ€|how were the Americans? Did they treat you well orâ€|?

Newinn:

Very-very nice, very nice, yeah. They treat and they, uh, trained the Vietnamese troops like, uh, firing and, uh, taekwondo and - all kind of - yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. And how were the Vietnamese units? Were they pretty good?

Newinn:

Uh, they very good, v-very good. They very, uh, a-aggressive. Tell them - they listen to the order and teach not Vietnamese but, uh, like Cambodian and also [INDISTINCT] ETHNIC, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah, the-the people that live up in the mountains?

Newinn:

Mountains, yes.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And we just, uh, joke with them, have fun, yeah. We contact with a lot of different, uh, local people beside Vietnamese, yeah, so we have fun.

Interviewer:

Alright. And then in about 1968 you joined the Vietnamese Army, right?

Newinn:

Uh, same thing, but different. Uh, we, uh, like SOG, SOG, SPECIAL SOG, what we call, uh - but they have special force, but different branch.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Some special force in the camp along the border, but some special force near, uhâ€|the capital and they do different jobs. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. So, what kind of jobs did you do when you started working with SOG?

Newinn:

I had a very interesting job, very, uh - thatâ€™s what we call, uh, strategy, you know, for - drop us to collect information.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

Uh, enemy line, behind enemy line, either border - cross the border or on the side of border. That depend on the situation when you got on the ground.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Youâ€™re free to travel. So, uhâ€|the boss - outside area, we go. If you might [INDISTINCT] the big battle ever have in the history, uh, so if you let me AGREE. Around April 1968, after the RIOT or the Tet Offensive, the United States tried to, uh, root - you know, to, uh, to find intelligence and press them to sit in the Paris Agreement, to sit down with us.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Because they-they say they, uh, above you, theyâ€™re superior. They control and own the country, 80 percent. Youâ€™re only 20 in the city. And, uh, I think the military, like General Westmoreland have to change the tactics. You cannot fight by this, uh - bring the whole regimen, division with TANG moving - they move and they run. So now they decide to use long-range patrol, LRRP, long range reconnaissance patrol, that being a small team. The smaller the better. Quiet. About up to nine or ten men in a squad.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And they use that kind of tactic to drop us in the jungle whenever the - we suspect - we try to locate information. We donâ€™t have ANYONE by mouth, and sympathizers, we donâ€™t have at all, no. So we need to find out.

Interviewer:

Okay. So they -

Newinn:

So - yeah, they, uhâ€| We tried to - and then early in the morning I remember get on probably Chinook from the location and fly to the headquarters of first, uh, division, Big Red One. I remember in - near - exactly a few miles from the Cambodia. When we land out there about 5:00 PM or whatever and you get shot by the enemy anyway. A soldier in the barracks walking out and look at us, say, â€œWow, youâ€™re a hero.â€ I said, â€œWhat do you mean?â€ Because you have no dog tag, no name tag, no rank, and helicopter, no - no marks, no number. Just, you know, a stripe with a color. I say, â€œOh, really?â€ And then we spent one night over there. The next day our mission go, and then we get on early, probably 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning.

They again drop us probably over there, maybe another country or here. We don't know. They gave us small, maybe four inch, the map - coordinates. That's all we know.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And they, uh, took up GUN SHIP COPTER, the tactic. You know the tactic how they fly?

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

Okay. We learn that. Hue, helicopter - uh, SLICK in the - down here [makes machinery noise] CNC Colonel [INDISTINCT] [makes helicopter sound] try to land, to land, and, uh, we see it up there. We saw a lot of b-bomb crater, B-52 [makes bombing sound], and then sometimes we saw the aircraft, uh, shut down before, laid out in the jungle. Make me nervous. Look. Are we going down there? We don't know. And then they look for LZ, landing zone, elephant grass probably or a FOOT on FEW SIDE, but many, many don't know which one. They look up the - uh, try to VISIT, uh, this guy, enemy to show that we not land here. We don't know. Like we don't know where are the enemy. We tried to locate to get information. That's all we need. So-so helicopter - so B-52 take care later, GET THE JUMP. So they drop us probably 6:00 in the morning. Actually, we jump, get down there, and we run to the good line and wait for a while, and I saw a lot of foxholes. They dig the way for us.

Interviewer:

The enemy or the, uh -

Newinn:

Enemy.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

They know that because every LZ in the spot in the jungle, they only have a spot of grass, you know? They dig the hole, they wait. They know it's coming. That's their job.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

And we don't know - and I saw that - oh, afraid, but I pick up some food left behind and smell - I say, "Okay, maybe a month ago they move already." You know, they wait because they know the tank divisions are no more. Westmoreland don't do that. Now we are LRRP time.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

So they dig a hole and they wait for you. They know.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

So nervous. And then we keep going, walk. Form single line, single file, walk slowly and observe. They go to the POINT and then I saw behind me, I saw a lot of grass and wind blow, look like they follow. Me nervous. You're scared.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

Newinn:

Yeah. Young man anyway. And we go, and then we saw one huge, maybe that tall, round - it's exactly like this table, ONE-THIRD. The Cambodian soldier say we go home. Why?

Interviewer:

So you had Cambodian soldiers with you?

Newinn:

No, some Vietnamese, some - yeah, depend on the troop or the team.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

They rotate, rotate to go. You go about one month and then your team again.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

One month you free to do - like vacation or drink in bar, whatever.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah. Soâ€¦I cannot tell - big boss lets us go home because, uh, the third - boss American, you know? Because I say, why? He say, â€œThis a temple. They all would pray to that animal. This animal where they have a candle holder on top of the TURTLE, you know? They have in that and thatâ€™s a kind of spiritual, uh, leader, tell you youâ€™re gonna get killed.â€ I say, â€œOh, yeah?â€ We walk different. You know, just cross [INDISTINCT]. And then, uh, somebody opened fire on the front. Maybe an hour later. You know, we go a lot of different terrain feature, uphill, down, a BUSH, [INDISTINCT] too much. They-they BUY YOU the drop from the tree. The LEECH. You know LEECH?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

In the jungle. I walk - I hear something [makes whirring sound]. It look like somebody drop popcorn on the TIN HOUSE, you know, [makes whirring sound]. That was them all. They smell your heat or hear sound, they drop in the SET. Oh, blood all over. Too much problem. And I say, â€œWhat happened there?â€ Thereâ€™s a PON man, he say, â€œI saw one guy ride a bicycle in the jungle. I shot him. Did you get it?â€ We all checked. No. This bicycle, the wheels still turn, so we put the hand grenade out there and we go our - you know, to [INDISTINCT] MAKE YOU DO and request to pick up, but no way because you expose yourself to enemy. Thatâ€™s the problem. Donâ€™t do that or whatever, you know? Soâ€¦and keep walk. I see another big LASER, maybe five foot long. The whole [INDISTINCT] that look at you. You know? It-it bend like this.

Another Cambodian or something. Oh, itâ€™s no good. [INDISTINCT] Theyâ€™ll go back and say no way we - something like that, until we walk until about 4:00 in the afternoon. We reach to the-the area they assign us.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

And I saw that - oh, maybe WIVES and the 89 MEN put [INDISTINCT]. Not smoking; just relaxing. On the map it showed that the highway the French built between Vietnam and Cambodia, right there in the - we call it like a MEMO Michelin - a rubber plantation. Used to maybe 80 years ago. Nobody use, so the grass - the tree cover the-the-the road and grass grow. Nobody use. But the map still showed that - the road. So we set up that, and I sit there about 30 minutes. I hear the bird, the black bird [makes quacking sound]. I say, â€œOh, some-something happened,â€ because the - but heat April, but HIKE too much. Hot though, and [makes swishing sound] on bicycle. [Makes swishing sound] NOT TODAY. from here to the ELEVATOR I could see.

I donâ€™t care because I see him and he still donâ€™t me. I look at the people.

Everybody - some guys donâ€™t care. They rest. So I just - in my mind I wish itâ€™s an old man with an ox cart that walk by - hey, old man. I can grab you and then I can go home to interrogate who are you, blah, blah, blah, and how many in a unit, but no one

happened. And then bird again, and this time I-I hear people walk. One guy walk-walked very, you know, straight, like ready to-to come - uh, confront you.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

And they walk but they keep looking - look at the sky because sometimes helicopter or NOTHING fly, they leave mail or something, but theyâ€™re very alert. They walk - everything laid out.

Interviewer:

Are these North Vietnamese?

Newinn:

North Vietnamese, yeah. I laid out low. Oh, I see him taller. The more lower he looked, the more I feel - I think like a German walking the Paris, uh - when they COME OVER from Paris they walk like that. Oh, two - the second one and the third one walk. I-Iâ€™I begin twist my safety pin, okay, because when they walk in Iâ€™m GONNA PULL IT. So the fourth one I say, â€œOh, this engineer,â€ because he-he have a-a - you know, a rule tape MIRROR, under the 4:30, 5:00 sun, afternoon, it look shiny. I say, â€œOh, maybe engineer try to build the road,â€ and then behind him I see one Air Force guy, tall, no hat. Just walk.

Interviewer:

American Air Force?

Newinn:

American. And I open fire. I donâ€™t care who - I ALL THE TIME open right there, the-the guy TAKE it. Just walk very easy. He walk HERE. Not back here. That follow like aâ€™I Open fire. And then people wake up and run. I run maybe BIG THREE like a MILE [INDISTINCT]. BREAK RUN. Run in the back. REPORT HOME. About 50 minutes helicopter came up there, and fly [makes zoom sound]. I run to the street. Come back. Firing resume. You cannot run like that. I said - you know how-how much afraid you run back? You have to walk back scared. I walk back and I see the three fallen down, GRAVEL, grass and dirt all over. Nobody. Nobody.

Scared, but [makes gun sound] [INDISTINCT] say - because they observe. We donâ€™t - and then I look across the road, like a trail. Oh, one AK-47. EVERYBODYâ€™S HURT. I see [INDISTINCT] single shot [makes gun sound] all die. I just shoot that guy [INDISTINCT]. And then I see it. Oh, one body. I run to - from that to here, a body. He lay on - on the side of the road with the grass. Oh, I tried to interrogate right away to get information, you know? I search him first thing. I search his wallet. I open it. Oh, a mom letter. Son - Dear Son, take care of yourself. We love you. You know, blah, blah, blah. And then the next one. Oh, another - like a driverâ€™s license type. UNCLE, uh, give him the hero soldier of the year, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I have no time. And I - donâ€™t worry, okay? I take care of you. Tell me who are you, uh, what your unit, uh, where is it, how many, blah, blah. And he say, â€œWhatâ€™s your rank?â€ Oh, I search him, I got K-54. I know that he officer, he leader. So I-I will get it and I maybe trade American for two KGB or something to get - you know get them EXCELLENT. That one over there, they want to, uh, confiscate enemy and trade American advisor, whatever. So I know heâ€™s a K-54 guy. I say, â€œWhatâ€™s your rank?â€ I say, â€œWe take care of you, donâ€™t worry. You okay.â€ And he-he-he say, â€œOh, but I -â€ [INDISTINCT] blown his body, his face because Claymore mine - some Claymore mine open, you know, and I shoot but I miss, so all over, Claymore mine. You know, p-pallet?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

Itâ€™s the reason why he laid up about 15 - 30 minute LESS THAN, but [INDISTINCT] and he opened with one eye like this. I say, â€œWhatâ€™s your rank?â€ He do this. Oh, I donâ€™t know, uh, Communist rank. I actually forget to learn, you know?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

Say, "Oh, captain?" He go - oh, no. Oh, platoon leader. Oh. Too high. [INDISTINCT], he say that. I SORRY. I don't even know. And after he say that I see 100 men attack with their signal - attack! Oh, they come back. We run. We left them behind. We left everything, but I got the wallet, okay? Run, and the helicopter show me - where are your troops? Why grenade smoke or yellow WITHDRAW and they lead us to, uh, 11:00 in a direction. We just follow through-through - so they can lead us to LZ. And, uh, they keep shooting around and I saw [INDISTINCT] some-some, uh, JET, SOME try to protect us.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

They lead us to the L zone, WHATEVER WE NEED. WHEN WE LEAD US? We run - and I saw the canvas, big like this building, maybe tall, about three or four floors. Canvas cover the whole jungle and, uh, we saw maybe 200, 300 pounds - big bag, like a rice bag. We put the hand in - IT STILL RUN, you know? Helicopter still - DO TURN AROUND, run and see - oh, we take one - take, uh, the penicillin in the bottle. You know penicillin?

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

And the water. And we look back in Saigon by PROPER government. We take it and run. That's it. I feel NORMAL, but actually they had good information for policymaker to know that [INDISTINCT] government deal with enemy, but at least - and they lead us. And I feel that my life better than - they say, "But we keep it -" and the wallet. And we run. Helicopter, American. All American unit come and picks us up. They say, "Hold on because no [INDISTINCT]. Too-too small, too narrow. Need angle to take off, but now too - you know, too heavy [INDISTINCT], but let them take CARE. And general come out a few minutes, uh, 10, 15 minutes, come out and check on us. "Thank you so much." They say he's a com - uh, regimen commander. His name's uh - he disappear on the map for three months. He hide somewhere. We could not find - locate him. He used to operate [INDISTINCT] province.

Interviewer:

This is the guy whose wallet you got.

Newinn:

Yes. Because I cannot verify, but, uh, Big Red One general. Oh, okay, okay. Uh, I don't care because they have jobs, you know, and I - and not to STUDY with him, but that's only - and he come out and shake hands and say, "Well, thank you." They tried to hide and to ambush Big Red One, so I think I feel happy because at least I can say few, you know, casualty because they tried to ambush or they relax after they operate and now they hide. They don't want to let us know the the Big Red One in charge of the area, disappeared on the map for three months. That's what I heard. And then sleep then until 6:00 when he come out and shake hands at 6:30. About 9:00 I hear boom, boom, B-52. General order - I don't get an order, but at least take care of that to destroy them. Instead of [INDISTINCT] destroy Big Red One. If you're gonna write this story, check about April before Mother's Day. A few weeks.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah, '68. That's the battle in Phoum Tanon. A name that I remember from the map. P-H-O-U-M. '68, 1968, April. Phoum, P-H-O-U-M, Tanon, T-A-N-O-N. Phoum Tanon. Somewhere there, because it - that's where they decided to set ambush.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

But I saw [INDISTINCT] in there and nobody report, nobody say anything. And then thatâ€™s, uh, uh - what do you call them? COSVN? Central Office of South Vietnam? Headquarters. They locate to protect the headquarters and locate - so thatâ€™s what they have real, uh, STORAGE, whatever. Big - like a headquarter [INDISTINCT] a big ordinance, uh, where you keep it in that one. [INDISTINCT]

Interviewer:

Okay. So, uh, a few questions about that.

Newinn:

Okay.

Interviewer:

What happened to the American pilot that you saw? The prisoner.

Newinn:

Okay. And in 19 - uh, 2000. Itâ€™s at the year 2000.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

I still dream about that after many years. I never go back there now. I decide to go back to Vietnam in 2000. First thing I go Ho Chi Minh Embassy. I tell - explain to them, â€œHey, you want to look for, uh, blah, blah, information at such a camp -â€œ I donâ€™t know the - I was there. Are you interested? I-lâ€™m ready to go. And the embassy told me that, â€œOh, you have to go to Hanoi. They have an office to take care of them.â€ So I donâ€™t want to come in there and to fly to Hanoi to report. They have to contact me. I still remember that. I showed the PLACE. So to find, uh, his body there or he prisoner, he die or live. Nobody say anything.

Interviewer:

But-but you all couldnâ€™t recapture - or release him.

Newinn:

No.

Interviewer:

You-you - okay.

Newinn:

No, no. After that [INDISTINCT]

Interviewer:

After the FIREFIGHTER.

Newinn:

If he smart he run or he KILL in there, that - so they can verify that information.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Very interesting. Nobody knows. If you find that year on the Phoun Tanon area, â€˜68 around April. I donâ€™t know the [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

And so the-the officer that you wounded, uh, he was a regimental commander?

Newinn:

Regimen commander. His name - I forgot the name. Maybe regimen - oh, 88 regimen, 88 NVA regimen.

Interviewer:

Eighty eight?

Newinn:

Eighty eight NVA regimen. Heâ€™s a commander.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

He has two stripes. I don't know what kind is that. Captain? He said no.

Interviewer:

Okay. And, uh, you don't still have that wallet, do you?

Newinn:

No. General keep.

Interviewer:

The general keep the wallet.

Newinn:

My job is politician.

Interviewer:

How about that?

Newinn:

And General fight the war. They keep it. They just - you know?

Interviewer:

And when you were running back to try to get to the LZ you passed a big supply HILL.

Newinn:

That's important, yes.

Interviewer:

Okay, and a lot of the supplies were from the South Vietnamese government? Do you think they were captured or do you think they were sold or black market? Was it black market do you think?

Newinn:

That-that's what the, uh, policymaker over here decide if they think that the president of South Vietnam is related to that, but actually only one produce that in-in capital of Saigon, making Saigon the capital.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

That means they have to relay with government very closely, so let them do the business.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

But why if they provide to enemy one, two, bag, maybe carry, uh, you know, sneak out, okay, but this is ton, ton, ton of them.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

If not MAKING China or Russia I know, but MAKING Saigon by ship.

Interviewer:

Big-big bags of rice and then -

Newinn:

Bag of rice with the blue line. That mean big one. That mean over 100 kilo.

Interviewer:

Alright.

Newinn:

But American, how many - 200 pounds, 300 pounds?

Interviewer:

Yeah. And then, uh, penicillin.

Newinn:

Penicillin and water, and we got penicillin and gave to general everything.

Interviewer:

Okay, wow.

Newinn:

So things [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

So you got a lot of good information.

Newinn:

Information BESIDE enemy headquarter, [INDISTINCT], the government of south - what do you call - uh, exile government against us with, uh - actually, the general, uh, from the north, you know, stay. He might die in there. We don't know. Plus, the information why a lot of product from South Vietnam - not [INDISTINCT] by government relationship [INDISTINCT]. We don't know. Two things happened in that battle, so we - so after that America can decide the policy. Oh, I don't deal with the people like [INDISTINCT]. Another one there - the job - my job [INDISTINCT] research about their policy.

Interviewer:

Okay. So that was one of the missions that you did when you were with SOG.

Newinn:

Okay.

Interviewer:

Right?

Newinn:

And now go to Phoenix Program.

Interviewer:

Okay. Tell me about the Phoenix Program.

Newinn:

Phoenix Program designed to-to, uh, root out VCI, the Viet Cong Infrastructure, underground. Because after we have conventional war with them and they - we block, we kill, but still pop up, pop up, pop up, people support. They have food. So we have to locate where are they? Who are they to support enemy? By information, by leading them and, uh, support them with money, food, rice, and information so they can still survive to get in. So that what Phoenix Program come out, to-to root them out, to tell the Paris Agreement, Paris peace talk, "Hey, Viet Cong cannot control 80 percent. No more. We control in the rural area." So that's where the Phoenix program come out. The program come out. We don't mean to assassinate people, but the media from here say, "Hey, that's a bad program. You kill people." Because you hear the sympathizer, hey, that guy [INDISTINCT] he'll come - I come and kill. No. We cross check information between two agencies.

The police and the agency military intelligence or sympathizer. We cross check them to make sure and we snatch at night.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Sometimes we jump black ops, we go black operations at night. Drop the flare and we land the helicopter in the far rural area, because local police can do it. Military do it. They run. So we have to do a different style. That's what I saw in '68, run by agency. I don't know.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

But we're military also, but different type with the SOG. SOG more [INDISTINCT] Phoenix Program come up, because after military by, uh - uh, run by pres - General Westmoreland didn't, uh, fight, so we tried to - and then I was involved with that. And we do almost the same with SOG, but at night in the province, most - each province.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And the [INDISTINCT] province near Cambodia also, right on the border.

Interviewer:

Okay. What-what province were you in?

Newinn:

Kien Phong Province. K-I-E-N, Phong, P-H-O-N-G, Kien Phong Province.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

In the Mekong Delta right at the border, next to the border of Cambodia. Because, um, enemy keeps survive, survive. They have PRIVATE CHIEF. We tried to get the CHIEF as much as we can to HAVE - the big guy.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

So whenever we are meeting, like, uh, information about the meeting or the group together that hides somewhere, we go in there. But usually in the daytime a company or a battalion, they move away - they run, so we do - sneak at night.

Interviewer:

Newinn:

But we do not kill. Uh, we interrogate. We build, uh, interrogation center in each province so we can catch them and we interrogate.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

After they [INDISTINCT] we released, but we do not, uh, shoot people like, uh, over here.

Interviewer:

Sure. How many Viet Cong switched sides after you talked with them?

Newinn:

Now what you mean? How you mean switch sides?

Interviewer:

Like how many of the Viet Cong came to-to the side of the South Vietnamese government?

Did any of them?

Newinn:

They have different branch to do that. The call it Chieu Hoi Program.

Interviewer:

Chieu Hoi.

Newinn:

Yeah, but itâ€™s a part of [INDISTINCT] agency, whatever, and that the way [INDISTINCT] and sympathizers tried to bring, yeah, and my-my job not do that. My job in-interrogate, interview the prisoner of war. The Chieu Hoi, or whoever, I ask them - a prisoner of war, we interrogate them - who, how, what, when, you know, whatâ€™d you do, how - thatâ€™s my job.

Interviewer:

And did they, uh - when you interrogated them, did they tell you what you wanted to know?

Newinn:

Uh, it depends. Itâ€™d depend on, uh, like what I, uh - January 28, uh, uh, â€™73 ceasefire, American withdrawal, and the-the agreement both sides in, uh, Paris say, â€œWell, will you stay - you stay there.â€ They leave them here and they-they tried to occupy us by put their flag. Hey, I own that - I own a spot there, uh PANTHER SPOT, whoever. Yeah. And we, uh, captured one guy. Heâ€™s a company commander ACCESS north, and we say, â€œRaise the hand.â€ He did not raise the hand. He lay flat up this way. And then I come in there. He didnâ€™t let me turn over. He had a grenade on his-his belly. You know, the pin, he ready. I say, â€œWhy didnâ€™t you pull it? Go ahead. Pull it and, uh, suicide yourself.â€ He said no. He was trained to come here to liberate the people, fight

Americans, but no Americans. Only I hear Vietnamese speaking language. I said, "Do you understand English?" He said, "No, but I can hear blah, blah, blah." [Laughs] So, he ready to kill because Americans come get you, they kill you anyway. So it's like you do one and one. So when he decide not, he only SEE Vietnamese people [INDISTINCT], and I interrogate him, and the-the jet fly over, you know, and we put him in, uh, the-the carry - like a bunk - uh, bunk bed or something. He roll over. I said, "What happened?" He said, "Oh, airplane fly -" I said, "No, no. You're in [INDISTINCT] now." They still afraid. They think airplane [INDISTINCT]. They live that way and they don't know that - they brainwashed, they fight against Americans only.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

But actually, no more Americans. So, uh, that my job, to interrogate; what unit, where you from, how long did you walk from north to here, uh, who treat you - a lot of questions. Yeah.

Interviewer:

And did he answer them for you?

Newinn:

Sure. They answer.

Interviewer:

Did you learn anything good from him?

Newinn:

Hm?

Interviewer:

Did you learn anything good?

Newinn:

Uh, he - I say, "If I release, what are you gonna do?" He say, "Oh, I will go out that to the barber, barber shop." He want to cut the hair. He's a company commander. We need to, uh, ask the HIGHER LEVEL. He said, "But I like to live - to work with the union." I never [INDISTINCT] private, like a capitalist to do your own shop, but he want to work with a group, like a government [INDISTINCT]. I said, "Oh, okay." And he called us, uh, [INDISTINCT], whatever. You and I. Very - that-that - even Vietnamese, but they use different, you know [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Now, by the end of the war you were working at the US Embassy, correct?

Newinn:

"72, yes.

Interviewer:

"72?

Newinn:

Yes, I was, um, uh, replaced. The US diplomat go home, because only keep embassy ambassador and counselor level in the lower province, so I took care of the province.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah, to do most, uh, we call them the politics.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Economic development. Just look what they do. Find out. Just like a reporter. Send home to Congress. They put together the 46 province - all the reports. Oh, okay. I see the PUZZLE. Okay, you do this, do this. That's the job.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

But at least somebody in that province to see overall to see whatâ€™s going on.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

We are not involved with military troops again, and now they tell me - and, uh, look into like a labor union, STOLEN union, uh, political parties, uh, religion bodies, Catholic. Whatâ€™s going on now, you know?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

[INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Okay. How-how did the war change after the Americans left?

Newinn:

Oh, uh, through the [INDISTINCT], the government in South Vietnam, they were - uh, received a less equivalent exchange, so they got desperate, need some help, but, uh, American cut the aid, so they keep - you know, morale go down, down, down, because like before, we support airplane or, you know, firepower, so they feel like, you knowâ€™llower.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Did you feel like the Americans let you down?

Newinn:

What Americanâ€™?

Interviewer:

Did you feel like the-the US government let-let down the people of South Vietnam?

Newinn:

Um, on my individual [INDISTINCT] I-I donâ€™t think that way, but some other bigger - like president in Vietnam, South Vietnam maybe think different way, say the Americans let them down because they deal direct with them. My level not that high, but I still, uh, you know, favor - uh, appreciate and see Americans do so much, but South Vietnam need to grow up too by themselves.

Interviewer:

Sure. What was it like in April of 1975 when the war was about to end?

Newinn:

Very - uh, every - people in the town, chaos. Confused. Why do you do this? Uh, when do you - how we do now? Everybody worry because, uh, short everything. Military put barbed wire on the road and, uh, loudspeaker on the tree to say, â€œDo not have any mind to move - get out of the country. Uh, a soldier can shoot anyone.â€ Everybody stay and wait for situation. We take care,â€ and the radio say that.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

The boss, uh, in the province say that so people [INDISTINCT] and sneak out. No way. Not open to get and buy ticket. So, chaos. Whoever in Saigon, they climb the tree, get in embassy, to the airport. I live in a small town far away.

Interviewer:

Where did you live?

Newinn:

[Clears throat] I live in - uh, at that time I was in Go Cong Province, uh, near-near METOK.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Go Cong Province.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

G-O-C-O-N-G, Go Cong Province.

Interviewer:

Okay. [Clears throat] Okay. And how did you leave the country?

Newinn:

Okay. And then around - about April 20, president resigned. [Clears throat] A lot of people, uh, tried to get out, and I read the news, I hear the news. People in Saigon are - some of them evacuate and I'm still stuck here. I contact with the counselor and counselor - sometime - nobody answer, but I still have special equipment because I represent the one province. They have their own equipment. Secret. Not secret, but high technology, like, uh, like I can call far away, but over there only telephone line busy. They do not have a cell phone like today. So lucky one day I call, one American voice say, "Okay, just hang in there. We can let you know the news."

And then, uh, he said, "Move back - go back from another - maybe 30, 40 miles - another office in, uh, [INDISTINCT] Province." Not too far. Okay, but I [INDISTINCT]. "Go there and wait for order," because embassy did not have a REASON order whoever, uh, move or help. Most of them probably go to military and-and airports. Some [INDISTINCT] go in Saigon and Ho Chi Minh Airport. They get on and, uh, maybe leave - you know, Babylift?

Interviewer:

Yep, Babylift?

Newinn:

Orphans, something, and C5 crash. We hear that, but I'm far down here. So last minute, 29, about 3:00, I hear the phone go, uh, by the machine. He say, "Okay, you have to get out to the soccer field." I said, "What about my-my equipment special?" He said, "Destroy it." Besides, I had to burn a lot of documents before I left the office because our interrogation reports, enemy, blah, blah, blah, who the enemy and the - you know?

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

So if they come, so I try to clean up. It took days to burn, but to stick - um, American, uh, LUCKY MEN, most of us so they had to RIP it up because it won't burn. If you burn, the enemy will look. And he say - I say equipment - I think MOTOROLA at the time - he said, "Destroy." I look; it have a red button - destroy. So I have to destroy the secret [INDISTINCT] good weapon. Don't let them catch. But the guns, yeah, we leave. I just had my pistol, and get on the-the soccer field. One squad with a truck escort us - escort me, I'm sorry, to the soccer field and an American helicopter picked me up. The-the squad [INDISTINCT] said, "What about me, sir? Can I, uh, get on too?" And no room. No room.

So the pilot guy say, "You go Can Tho." Can Tho maybe about 80, 100 miles away. "So they can pick you up." Actually, they go there. They stop because traffic stop everywhere. So, I don't know that - so that - so I get on and then they drop me, uh, 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon the last day, 29. That's the last-last time - the latest to the - what was Midway. And they pushed helicopter, airplane down, so they lead me to the second floor. Now there [INDISTINCT] ready to fight. [INDISTINCT] airplanes. They fly, try - JET back and forth, try to harass enemy. Enemy move into Saigon already.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Yeah, and we move out [INDISTINCT] and they move us to the merchant ship, maybe seven - five or seven ships parked two or three miles away from - so the ship - a small boat

to get to another ship. Another ship that carry cargo. They wrap it by, you know, by the rope and we hang on the rope with KID and now there are a lot of [INDISTINCT] Navy or Marine. "Get out! No, no, don't come to the ship," because it might explode. But people say, "Please, please." Stand back. Soldiers, everybody got on. So

Interviewer:

Where were - where was your wife and your son at this time?

Newinn:

They're with me.

Interviewer:

They're with you.

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah. Lucky. That's it.

Interviewer:

Okay. And your son was sick, right?

Newinn:

He was sick, yes, because, uh, when we got in the merchant ship they parked there at least, uh, one or two days to wait, uh, more people, and they, uh - the ship, they put us on the - on the, you know, on the bottom of the ship, open, [INDISTINCT] for the cargo. They put a barrel, maybe 100 gallon - how big is a gallon? Some people can use one, but somebody, a bad kid or, you know, a bad parent, [INDISTINCT] diarrhea, so they just put and they wash their butt.

Interviewer:

Oh, no.

Newinn:

So now we drink it and we all got sick. It got dirty.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

They do not prepare, uh, running water. So, oh, a lot of people sick on the ship. They say, "Anybody sick?" Oh, we're sick so bad. Oh, we dropped you in, uh, Subic Bay.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

So, treatment. So he got in the hospital right away and, uh

Interviewer:

So you stopped in Subic Bay.

Newinn:

Yeah, and-and dropped us there, and they continued.

Interviewer:

And they went to Guam, right?

Newinn:

And a lot of people sick.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Continue to Guam the next, like, week and we go to Guam.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

How was the camp in Guam?

Newinn:

Uhâ€¦

Interviewer:

Was that a rotate point?

Newinn:

Uh, no.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Not Camp Anderson - Henderson. The - no, noâ€¦

Interviewer:

Orote Point?

Newinn:

Yeah. A long time, yeah. Orote Point. Something, yes.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

What was it like in that camp?

Newinn:

Just a regular camp, of course, crowded and, uh, they dropped some old clothes and I tried to, uh, see, uh, pick some clothes and, um, one guy, â€œHey, Henry.â€ He meet me. I say, â€œWell, I -â€œ um, you know, smoke cigarette at that time, but he say, â€œOh, I give you \$2.00.â€ I remember, he gave me \$2.00. I save it. I do not smoke no more. I buy socks for my son to warm him up.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

\$2.00 in my pocket at that time.

Interviewer:

So, thatâ€™s all you had.

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Is \$2.00.

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Did you bring anything with you from Vietnam or you couldnâ€™t bring anything?

Newinn:

Couldnâ€™t bring anything because more - and-and we hide for days.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

At least, uh, one week, one week, after the 20. So we had - we just wrap in the pillowcase for diaper, a little diaper for him and run and run and get on an airplane. Lucky so much. [INDISTINCT] and then we get out to Guam, and I remember people just look around [INDISTINCT] and try to SLEEP, and to - we get to Camp Andersen and we have to ask the military to give my son a jacket for-for soldiers. You know, too big for him. [Laughs] So we buy a sock - I had to buy a sock for him.

Interviewer:

Okay. Now when you were in Guam, um, did they try to - uh, what kind of food did you have in Guam?

Newinn:

Uh, in Guam, letâ€™s seeâ€¦for Guam - food okay. Food is okay.

Interviewer:

It was okay?

Newinn:

Not as good as Camp Andersen.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Camp Andersen so good, very good.

Interviewer:

Did they try to cook Vietnamese food for you at Pendleton orâ€¦?

Newinn:

Pendleton they try but not right, yeah. Not right.

Interviewer:

[Laughs]

Newinn:

All-all people follow the long line for fried chicken, but the, uh, they gonna - chop suey - they donâ€™t want to eat chop suey. Chinese style too-oo soft. Cook with the chicken with the cabbage, too soft. They donâ€™t eat it. Only-only long line for chicken, fried chicken.

Interviewer:

Okay. And, uhâ€¦

Newinn:

The MEAL - breakfast so good. Unbelievable.

Interviewer:

Yeah? How long were you in Camp Pendleton?

Newinn:

About three months.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

I kept looking for the, um, sponsorship after they screen you up from Guam. First of all, they ask, uh, what - where do you want to from - to mainland? I say, â€œWhat mainland?â€ Mainland United States. Because after everybody [INDISTINCT], and we have three choice; uh, Florida, uh, Indiana [INDISTINCT], and California, Camp Pendleton. And I say, â€œOh, I hear about Florida is nice weather like Vietnam.â€ I said, â€œCalifornia.â€ Sorry, full. So I asked the guy in front of me, he said, â€œOh, Golden State California. The best.â€ I said, â€œHow do you know?â€ He said, â€œMy son. Heâ€™s Chinese.â€ Okay. I go, â€œWhat about Indiana?â€ He said, â€œDonâ€™t go there. The Indian people, theyâ€™ll kill you.â€ They [INDISTINCT]. They wonâ€™t - people wonâ€™t [INDISTINCT], you know? So nobody wanted to go to Indiana at that time, so I go to Camp Pendleton, and then we went there kind of behind - most people were already there, so they put me in the tent instead of like a hangar [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Yeah, but metal. It warm.

Interviewer:

Like a quonset hut.

Newinn:

Yeah, something. That more - and-and, uh see [INDISTINCT] bottom [INDISTINCT] on the ground - on the dirt. So hot in the daytime, cold at night. So my son sick. I use the \$2.00 to buy a sock or something for him, soâ€¦ And we decide to look for sponsorship. Some of the church, the Catholic Church. Iâ€™m not Catholic. And most Protestants or Baptists - I

donâ€™t know out here what kind, so I go individual, uh, sponsorship, and I look into the Red Cross, uh, trailer, you know, trailer.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

They try to find sponsorship and other, like, uh, USCC and, uh, what is that? The Catholic - you know, uh, it depend on the-the trailer you want to go. I go to, uh, you know, individual and I saw the one - I look for something, maybe can take care of my family. And American, they sponsor but they donâ€™t want a big Asian - too big family to sponsor. Most CHINESE or it was a big - whole bunch. So, uh, my-my small, only one child, one year old and my wife. I say, â€œOh, this match.â€ A doctor live in, I remember, uh, Huntington Beach. I say, â€œOh, California. I donâ€™t know that.â€ Uh, husband do yardwork, wife can do laundry and - okay, perfect for me. I ask them. They say, â€œOh, he on vacation.â€ And next week I come back to the trailer and say - â€œOh, he just back, but sorry, I have a couple from Mexico, Mexican guy.â€ So I [INDISTINCT]. I donâ€™t know who can sponsor. And then I remember I-I met a-a general.

I think a sergeant.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

Young man work in capital when he went to my SISTER have a-a bar, restaurant, so he gave me the address. I [INDISTINCT]. So, I called him. Heâ€™s single and he-he had - he, uh, sponsor. So we went to Houston, Texas.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

His name Tim STRANGEN. He live with his parents. He a single man, long beard, ride motorcycle, but he have a big house. [INDISTINCT] I just met him, you know, like in a [INDISTINCT] or something, but he sponsor me. When I first there I go work as a busboy, clean up the-the table or something.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

Then, um, I happy to, uh, MERGE to this country.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

To pay back, like my two children, uh, perform a lot of musical entertainment to the charities to raise funds, like Dancing with the Stars or fundraising.

Interviewer:

Sure

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Now, um, when you were in Camp Pendleton, uh, what happened to your - all your-your siblings? Were they still in Vietnam or did they come to America?

Newinn:

Nobody come to America until today because, uh, my brothers all stay back in Vietnam because - and my sister, whole family. But my parents died a long time ago when I was young.

Interviewer:

So you were -

Newinn:

My wifeâ€™s family all stayed there; her mom, everything stayed there, because they do

not - at that time do not, uh, have - what you call, uh, transportation, no means to -

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

And they just hang in where they live and they get - they receive a lot of hard time from new regime, because I came out of the country. So, uh, they cannot go to college, they cannot get a job, they - and, uh, some, uh, companies CASUALLY report where I live in, uh - what do you call them, campout - US, uh, uh, embassy house, uh, in charge. They move all my stuff, even my DRAPE - they take TWO, and my personal, uh - like a dining set that went to my mother. they come and get it and say, "Hey, that's because he-he got out of the country [INDISTINCT]."

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

Punishment.

Interviewer:

So how were you able to get in contact with your family when you came to America?

Newinn:

Uh, I never contact with my family for many years and they don't know where and how I live or die until maybe four or five years later. My wife met someone in the grocery Asian and asked her [INDISTINCT], "Oh, that's okay. I help you. You send your letter to this address in Hong Kong. They will transfer you." So she wrote letter to notify we are okay in America. So-so we wrote at that time to Hong Kong, about 1985, '86, after 10 or 15 years, and they will know, oh, we're okay in the United States now.

Interviewer:

So it took you that long to

Newinn:

Yeah, because

Interviewer:

Now when your wife mailed somebody in Hong Kong, did she have to pay them to send letters to -

Newinn:

No.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

I-I don't think so. Ask her that.

Interviewer:

I'll ask her.

Newinn:

I don't remember. I-I don't think that, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And I say go ahead and send because she already -she's the older sister in the family [INDISTINCT] one, and my-my brother [INDISTINCT] so I did not care much to notify them, but they wonder where I am. So I leave Vietnam, but it doesn't mean leave with family.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Newinn:

I leave my town. They live in a different town. But we rarely to connect, only by - uh, we don't have a phone at that time. We're not rich enough to have connect phone, but I can connect on the military line, yes, but they just SURVEILLANCE.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Thatâ€™s the reason I do not have much connection until my wife notified the family. The family just notified back that weâ€™re okay.

Interviewer:

Okay. And how would they send messages back to you here in America?

Newinn:

Oh, first they KNOW Iâ€™m so sick. I need some help. [Laughs] They always, â€œI need some help.â€ Money or sick here, sick there, and medicine, uh, vitamins. We all have to send [laughs] - and we do a lot of heavy work here. Itâ€™s more money [INDISTINCT] of course because United States - what do you call them now? Uhâ€¦you know, blockade.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

They call it block. So they stop -

Interviewer:

Embargo?

Newinn:

Embargo.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

So there is no MILK, no sugar, no food. Itâ€™s this way for us, but, uh, so we send [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

And how would you send it to Vietnam? Did you - were you able to finally send it directly to them?

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer: When, uh, when the -

Newinn:

Uh, we sent the correct papers so [INDISTINCT], because too much they donâ€™t know about shipping, \$3.50 a pound. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Wow.

Newinn:

It cost more than that, but we have to send some kind of, uh, some medicine-type - you know, like, uh - whatâ€™ you call it - backache, back pain, liquid - what the green stuff?

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Something like that, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay, so youâ€™d send that to your family back in -

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah, of course, and they can sell it or they can survive - or they can use it, but mostly they sell it.

Interviewer:

Okay. Was this after normalization of relationships?

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Between - so this is after 1995?

Newinn:

After that, right. But before that hard. [INDISTINCT] After '95 I CAN remember.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

We sent after - oh no, yeah. After '95 we sent.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

And then until 2000 - first time I go back to Vietnam after 25 years.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What was it like when you went back?

Newinn:

Oh, I, uh, spent maybe \$1,000 per person to fly home to cry. But we cry we're happy because we walk off the airplane, whole family stayed down there. We all cry, cry, cry. Everybody face and hair turned white. Just cry. That's it.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah, cry. But we, uh, spend money to cry. It-it's good.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

Have you had it like that?

Interviewer:

No.

Newinn:

No, I mean buy money to laugh, buy money to cry, but it's good. It's a relief.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

Relief.

Interviewer:

And, uh, what-what job did you end up doing here in America?

Newinn:

Uh, I do, um, [clears throat] - after I, uh, busboy, I do some kind of, uh, intake. I mean like a-a application, uh, fill out for the refugees to apply for social services.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you worked with refugees.

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

They, uh - just like a social worker, how they doing, uh, social - uh, involved with ed-ed-

education, consumer education, how to do this, do that with that.

Interviewer:

Okay. So, uh, did you work primarily with Vietnamese refugees?

Newinn:

I worked primarily with Vietnamese refugees, yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Like if they need help, like take them - go hospital.

Interviewer:

Right.

Newinn:

They don't know how. Uh, know where to go. At that time, you know? They, uh - they don't know where to go. We need to take to hospital or whatever. After that, um then I take the - go to school, take, uh, engineering, drafting, and I worked from-from that day until now. I got, uh, into an engineering company and then retired.

Interviewer:

Wonderful.

Newinn:

And then I make good life, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Newinn:

And I put my kids, uh, two of them through college, all finish college and, uh, now we - uh, all grow up and we, uh, pay back country by giving a lot of, uh, performance, yeah, performance - like my son, he's a second, uh - after he compete in Graceland - my son is an Elvis impersonator. He came second. The Vietnamese [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Wow.

Newinn:

Yeah. And my daughter one time, uh, uh, not - this first season with the Texas Cheerleaders.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

Yeah, and then now she married, at home, and have two children.

Interviewer:

Good.

Newinn:

Yeah, but at least - and we use that kind of talent to MERGE with, uh, out here and gave back by performing free.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Newinn:

And, uh, like you say, Dancing with the Stars sometimes like that and fundraising go to [INDISTINCT].

Interviewer:

Now, do you feel that America welcomed you when you had to come here, when you were forced to come here?

Newinn:

Unbelievable.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

They were so nice at that time, very helpful, and everybody come and try to help. Go to many, uh, church andâ€¦peopleâ€™s church, even, um, different religions. They still - and now my house got flooded and suddenly from the sky a group of Mormon come and - you need a clean up? Oh, they all come and help to move all my WALLS because of the flood.

Interviewer:

Was this the big flood a few years ago?

Newinn:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

The big hurricane?

Newinn:

Harvey. It hit my house. I got five feet deep and, uh, the water stayed there at least three weeks.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Newinn:

The other house maybe a couple days, because it retreat. They can walk in right with my - the streets too full. They not allowed to get in still. Police not letting us in, so I was STUCK for three weeks [INDISTINCT] all destroyed, and I just looked there. I donâ€™t know what to do. And then one guy dressed in yellow, â€œDo you need help?â€ I said, â€œWhat do you mean help?â€ Iâ€™ll remove all your stuff. A white guy. American. I say, â€œUm, how much?â€ He say, â€œNo.â€ What do you mean no? He said, â€œFree.â€ Oh yeah, go ahead. [Laughs] Find out thatâ€™s a Mormon Church.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Newinn:

So now even I heard about Mormons. In this country, they do not discriminate the skin, the religion. They help. Theyâ€™re a good one. Unbelievable. But I know - I hear that a lot of, uh, people disagree with this country, and they move out to Canada. I say, â€œOh, yeah? Go ahead.â€ I say [INDISTINCT] donâ€™t come back. But they donâ€™t go. [Laughs] Theyâ€™re still here. So, donâ€™t complain. This country LIVE. I LIVE in [INDISTINCT] many years. I know. Very tough. [INDISTINCT] Cuba, you know, Pakistan - you go and see.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Newinn:

They talk. I donâ€™t know about politics here, but free of speech, yeah, but they donâ€™t know. They talk.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Well, sir, Iâ€™m so glad you came in to share your story with us today.

Newinn:

Yes.

Interviewer:

This was fabulous. Thank you.

Newinn:

I very, uh, happy to be here and, uh, to get on your-your show.

Interviewer:

Well, thank you, sir.

Newinn:

Thank you very much, yes.

Interviewer:

Have a good day.

Newinn:

Oh, thank you.

