



Namhuong Miner Interview
Salt Lake City, Utah

Interviewer

Tell us your name.

Namhuong Miner

My name is Namhuong Miner.

Interviewer

And you're from Vietnam?

Namhuong Miner

I'm from Vietnam, yes.

Interviewer

What year were you born?

Namhuong Miner

I was born in 1957.

Interviewer

So you were there after the French had left?

Namhuong Miner

Yes, after the French left.

Interviewer

Tell us about your family briefly.

Namhuong Miner

Okay, my family was from the north, my parents were from the north. And after the French left they had a chance, when the Communists took over, they had a chance to leave the north to move to the south and they did in 1954. And I was the first born in the south, so that's why my name was Nam, that means "south", and Huong is the

freedom of the south.

Interviewer

And why did they leave the north?

Namhuong Miner

Because they want to be in the freedom place, not with the Communists. They don't believe communism is a good regime.

Interviewer

Why were the French so awful? Why did everyone want the French out?

Namhuong Miner

I wasn't born at the time.

Interviewer

You must have heard stories.

Namhuong Miner

I heard story that when they came to take over Vietnam, it's like a colonist regime so they look down at people. So a lot of people don't like. My dad remember that they say that they look at us as like we're very low. So we have to bow down to them. So he had that grudge, you know?

Interviewer

And from there, what were the Communists doing? What were they doing? I know you were looking for freedom but what were they doing that was so awful?

Namhuong Miner

I was taught by my parents because I don't live with them very much. I was taught by my parents that Communists are not truthful people. Whatever you work is for the government but not for yourself because you work hard but you don't have anything; everything goes to the government because they feel that everybody and equal and they don't want intellectual people, they don't let you go to school because they're afraid. They can only rule the people that don't know much, that are in the dark.

Interviewer

Tell us about where you grew up and what it was like in 1957, from the time you grew up.

Namhuong Miner

When I was born my parents lived in the south in a house. Up until I was three I don't remember much. But when my dad became a lawyer and he moved to Cholon, they call it Chinatown in Vietnam, and he has his office there that I grew up most of my adulthood, up until 20 in that house.

Interviewer

This is in Saigon?

Namhuong Miner

It's in Saigon. And he has his office and a lot of people ask why you have your office in Chinatown when you're Vietnamese and he said because Chinese people with very loyal people, it's very easy to work with them because if you render them a service, and that you help them, they remember you for life. They become your friend. Whenever you need them, they're always there for you. Very, very loyal people.

Interviewer

So tell us about your life? What was Saigon like? This is the early '60s.

Namhuong Miner

Early '60s, yup. I have a little privilege, you know, growing up in a family with a little class. Because Vietnam used to be a French colony and my dad went to a French school, so we, as the children all were sent to French school up till high school. Life was pretty good. We're not rich but we have pretty much what we need. We're considered lucky. Because of the culture, the way I grew up, I'm a little bit stuck up because when you are in that, you have a little bit of class, you tend to associate with people in your same class. But now I look back and I feel like I shouldn't be that way. When I live in Chinatown I missed the opportunity to mingle with the people there because I feel like I'm too good for them. So I missed the opportunity to learn Chinese because I could, but I choose not to because I was too stuck up.

Interviewer

Paint a picture about Saigon in the early '60s. What it looked like, what it smelled like, what you saw and the American presence that was beginning to build up.

Namhuong Miner

Saigon at that time was very beautiful and nice. We have a lot of French culture. There's a lot of French culture that is left behind like hotels and restaurants. A lot of them still French name. And when the American came I was quite young at that time. I know they're there, I'm not surprised. I don't get shocked when I see them because I was exposed to the Western culture during school and I saw French people and my teachers are French. So the Americans, they look like the French. They don't speak the same language. So the culture is almost very similar.

Interviewer

So what did you think of the Americans?

Namhuong Miner

The Americans, I think we are fortunate because they came and help us fight the Communists. Because since Vietnam split, the Communists, the north, always want to invade the south right away. I mean they always want to take over the south. So that's why we have the event, the Tet in '68. If not because of the American we would be lost at that time. Not until, you know, '75.

Interviewer

What was your impression of the Americans? We must have behaved differently, there must have been things that we did that were funny.

Namhuong Miner

Yeah, we always think that they're crazy. I don't know, in our mind it's different. You look mostly like the French but the culture is way different. And we always think that they are crazy.

Interviewer

Tell us more.

Namhuong Miner

Because, you know, for example, like driving. They always have accident happen. But now I look back, it's us, it's not them. Because they try to drive in their lane and then people cut through left and right. We don't know that. In Vietnam it's crazy too because you know, that's the way they drive. And there was so many accidents happen because of the driving. And we think, oh, American are crazy. But now I look back, it's us, it's not them.

Interviewer

What did you think of their food and their restaurants and their taste of entertainment?

Namhuong Miner

Some of them I like and some I don't. I remember the ice cream, the first time that I tasted the American ice cream. And I could not describe the richness because I don't know the rich term and I say, "This is heavy. Why their ice cream is so heavy?" And I don't know why, but now I know that's because of the cream and the richness of it. And some we like. We like most of the American food that were imported in Vietnam.

Interviewer

So you're in a private school?

Namhuong Miner

I was in a private school.

Interviewer

Tell us about some of your friends and tell us about what you talked about with the war? It was going on around you?

Namhuong Miner

It's part of our lives so it's always there. So it's there so we feel like it's part of our lives so we don't feel like it's an inconvenience or it's horrible. Because I live in the city so I don't see much, the war going on in the countryside. So it's part of our life. It's there. And I have friends, I have both Chinese friends and Vietnamese friends and we don't talk about the war. We just like a typical teen-ager and just go play and go to school. We just don't talk about it.

Interviewer

So what year did you graduate from school?

Namhuong Miner

1975. Right before the fall of Saigon.

Interviewer

Vietnam must have been changing from after Tet to the fall. You must have seen some big changes going on

around you?

Namhuong Miner

Not much change. I was like 11 at the time of the Tet, when the event happened. And up until '75 there was not much change. As I told you that we lived in the city, we don't see much, but during the Tet event, I did see rockets shooting down from my house and we see people, you know, we can see people get scary. But because my parents were calm at that time, so we as children, we didn't have that fear. But I remember we have sandbags for bomb shelter and then we all stay on the lower level because we afraid that we stay up on the second floor then it might not be a good idea. And then we tape all our windows with glasses, all Scotch tape so if something happen, shatter, then it stay, you know, within the tape.

Interviewer

So when Vietnam starts to fall, what were they telling you and what were your friends saying? There must have been a dramatic change.

Namhuong Miner

It was a dramatic change but my dad didn't think that it would happen that soon because he trusts – he feels like, oh, it's coming but I don't think that we will lose. That's his feeling so we, as a children, you know, we feel like, oh, we're safe. And until that day on the 30th of April, and I thought I was dreaming because I say, it cannot be happening. It's true. So we feel like we were in a dream.

Interviewer

So what was happening?

Namhuong Miner

We lost it. We lost. They invade the south and we lost the war and here. We are under the Communists.

Interviewer

Tell us about what you saw, tell us about that day.

Namhuong Miner

That day I remember looking through, out the window and I saw a Communist soldier, a Communist soldier behind a tree, kind of, you know, try to see what's going on. And I say, this is true? And I feel like this is it. We're done. No future. Nothing. And we don't know what's going on and we feel like we're a little bit scared. I was and I'm sure my

parents were, but they try not to show, they try not to alarm, you know, the kids. And I feel like my future, I have no future. That's my feeling. I say that's it. It's over.

Interviewer

So what started happening? Tell us about the day to day.

Namhuong Miner

Day to day, you know, then my dad used to work as a lawyer and suddenly there's no job. His office has to be closed. And for three years we used our savings. Before the war, before '75, 1972 my dad send my sister, after her high school, he sent my sister to Switzerland for college. That's the privilege that we have in our family, college. And I have another brother that went through exchange student and he came back and then he went back to the States. And I have a sister that was married to a husband that live in LA. So half of us – we have six sibling – three are out and three are behind in Vietnam. So we, as a family, we live on the savings that we have and then my sister was able to send some money because we didn't have any resource.

At the time, it was okay. I get used to the new government, the new regime, until June of 1978. Two people from the government came during very early in the morning while we were eating breakfast and they say that they have to take my dad away. And my dad was surprised and he say, "Why do you want to take me away? In what right? What is the cause?" And they say they don't know why but they have, you know, they know that they have to take my dad away. So they let him finish his breakfast, change, and then pack a little bit in a small bag and took him away. And another time my life was crashed because they come and take my dad away and we don't know where he's going. They didn't let us know where and why they took him away. So we just so afraid. We saw him, you know, leave. And after that my mother was afraid that if they take away my dad, they might take away our house. That's the way it is. They would send us out and then they don't care where we going and then they might take away our house and take away our life too.

So at that time she tried to – I have a younger brother – so she tried to let my brother escape from Vietnam. And I told her, if my brother is going, I'm going too because there's nothing here for me to stay. There's nothing here for me. There's no future, there's nothing for me to hold on to Vietnam. And she say, she kind of hesitated. She say, "Okay, why don't we let your brother go and then you can wait." And I say, "No, I'm not waiting." So I said I will go. So my mother was very superstitious at that time, she went and seek for a fortune teller and she came home and she say, "No, you can't go because the fortune teller say that if you go you will drown in the sea. And even if you go swimming you will drown in the swimming pool because that's what it is." And I say, "No, that is not true." The mistake that they made because I was sent to a French school so I don't believe in those superstitious things. So I want to prove to my mother that I want to leave, to prove to her that she was wrong, and the fortune teller was wrong. And I convinced her and she let me go. And I'm still alive.

Interviewer

Tell us about your journey.

Namhuong Miner

My journey. At that time, we have to bribe the government to let us escape. I don't know how many ounces of gold, four or five ounces of gold. It was a lot of money at that time for both of us to go. So we managed to go to the countryside to the south and stay there. We stayed there like probably a month or so before we were able to escape, get on a boat, a very small – probably about 18 meter long – and we were packed like sardine. And at that

time my brother, he was in the swimming team. He say he has to build up his strength so he can escape and he doesn't get sick on the sea. And he kept telling me, "You need to do something." And I say, "Oh, I'll be fine."

And both of us, when we were on the sea, he was the one who threw up left and right, and here I am sitting, eating things. We made it. We made it after like two nights and three days. And we land in a very isolated islands in Malaysia at night. And the boat, it was like the boat was tilt. So whenever the boat tilt onto the shore we have to jump. So we jump and I remember that if I stay below then people vomit and I was so sick so I have to stay up. And if you stay up and water go over, up your head and you were soaking. And I can feel the cold through my bones. But we made it. We didn't get sick, we made it. So we went to the shore, we went to Malaysia and the Red Cross came and help us.

So it was a very isolated island. They gave us blue tarp and we have to build our own hut. My brother has to go to the forest and chop wood and make our own hut. And they give us food. And we live like Robinson Crusoe. But we were happy because we know this is just temporary because we are a step away from freedom, we are a step away from a better life and a better future. So we were in Malaysia in that island for five month. Five month. And I remember the food, it was so malnouritious, they didn't give us enough food. And I remember they give us dry fish that people don't eat, they throw out on the beach. So I escape with my cousin and she collect those fish and she dry them and she cook them and we ate them to the point that I think I had hepatitis because the white part of my eyes become yellow. Very yellow. And at that time, no matter what sickness you have, and how sick you are, in the morning they have a nurse station and you have to be in line and they give you one pill. I don't know what it is. And I can see that all the people that were in line with me got the same thing that I have. One pill. And the next day, if you don't get better, go back in line until you get better. And I got better. I got over it. And for a while they organize school for people to learn English.

So I saw a few of my dad's students because after the Communist took over he taught French private lessons to the people that want to take lesson. So I met a few student of his. So I taught those people either – I know a little bit of English at that time, so I was able to teach them English. And I was able to get some money. Not very much, a little bit. I don't know what is ten Malaysian dollars equal to the U.S. So we were able to have better food because they do sell food on the island. And through the Red Cross I was able to contact my sister so she was able to sponsor us out to go to the States and we stay in LA and we settle in LA with my brother.

Interviewer

What was it like to come to the United States? How did you get here?

Namhuong Miner

The Red Cross help us and we have to sign a promise note that we're going to pay them back the ticket price that they allow us to come. So that's it. We came and she picked us up from the airport and we stayed with her probably for a few weeks and then she say in order for you to be on your own. So she has an apartment building, she let us stay in that apartment building. And then we worked. I remember my first job was at McDonald's, we didn't last very long. After three days we decided this is not – because I barely speak English. I do speak English but my English was like more like a French accent, with a very French accent. So we didn't last long. After three days I decided no, McDonald's is not a good place.

So we work at the nursing home serving breakfast to the elderly people. So it was better. I don't have to speak much but I still speak with a French accent. But we managed for a while and then I went to college. I attend Santa Monica College. And then at that time I came to LA in April 1979. And a couple month later the missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came and knock at my door. And that's how I knew about the church. And one of them was my husband.

Interviewer

During all this time, you're terribly worried about your father?

Namhuong Miner

I was.

Interviewer

Tell us about what you were hearing.

Namhuong Miner

I was worried. After we made it to the state, I heard from my mother. My mother has to stay back home because she want to stay for my dad, she can't leave. You have to understand that the Communist regime, they take you away, but they don't provide you food. They give you very minimal, very bad food. Their idea is for you to perish and die in prison.

So finally my mother was able to have word from him and where he was, so she was able to bring supply to him. But without seeing him. They only let her see him once a year. That's during the Tet, during New Year. But when they see each other they were so emotional so they were not able to speak much. But my mother was very faithful to my dad. She supplied him food every month. She was able to bring him food and then leave it there. And then sometimes they take some away, whatever good things they take away and then whatever they don't want they give it to my dad. And he was able to survive for ten long years. He was kept for ten years. And the way is he used to be a general secretary for the anti-Asia Communists Association. I think it's because of that. So every day they asked him to confess and every day he write. And they say, "This is not right, you have to confess more." And he said, "I don't have anything else." So every day he write the same thing. So after ten years they decided they can't extract anything from him. They let him go.

Interviewer

When did you see your parents again?

Namhuong Miner

So he was released in 1988. So they left December 1990 to go to Canada because I have a sister in Canada. She sponsored them to Canada. So they came to Canada, December of 1990. And they came to Salt Lake to visit with me the way that I went to the hospital to deliver my very first child. I went to the airport to pick them up. On the way home my husband dropped me at the hospital, take them home and came back for the delivery. They say they have to be coming that day to witness the birth of my first child.

Interviewer

Tell us about that moment when you were reunited.

Namhuong Miner

It was unspeakable. Because they made it. I feel like they deserved, you know, after ten years he deserved to be in the place that he can breathe freedom. It was a special moment. It seemed like when we see each other, we didn't

have the time to talk much because I have to go to the hospital and on the way back we were so busy and after my child was born we were so busy, you know, with my baby. So we seemed like we want to bury our past. We didn't want to talk about it because it was quite painful. Until many, many years later, he decided to write the ten years that he was in prison and that's what the book that I brought today. If you ever read the book, "Death in Shanghai," it's exactly the same thing that my dad went through.

Interviewer

Can you explain some of those things they had him do at the education camps?

Namhuong Miner

No, the thing is he didn't have to be – more he was kept in prison. They didn't force him to do any labor, nothing. They just kept him because they don't want him to be out. They afraid that he might do something against them. They just kept him for ten years. And all the friends that were captured at the same time with him, most of them died in prison because they were not – how do I say – they were so afraid and so they don't write the same thing every day. But my dad, he trained himself. He know the Communists. So if you write the same thing every day, you do exactly the same thing then they know there's nothing they can extract from you. And some of his friends died in prison; the same group that was captured with him.

Interviewer

Did he even think of escaping?

Namhuong Miner

I don't think that thought came to his mind because he know so well. Oh, at that time, my brother that was in the state, I think he was in Minnesota at that time, wrote a letter to Kennedy, Senator Kennedy. So I think they contacted human rights, what do you call that? And then they interfered. I think they interfered. So he was released through that interference that he was able to be released.

Interviewer

How did your mother survive?

Namhuong Miner

My mother survived. When I came to the States I sent her money once a while for her to survive. She stayed in the same house, luckily that they didn't take over the house. And she has relatives that come and stay with her. And my friends, my good friends that came and stayed with her and helped her.

Interviewer

Give us a description of your country and your food.

Namhuong Miner

Vietnam is very beautiful and unspoiled, nature, it's natural. During the time that I grew up, there were not a lot of moped, there were not a lot of moped at that time. We do have car, we were lucky we have cars. So it's beautiful. We don't have a lot of grass like here because in the cities we have house, you know, close to each other. I remember the house that I grew up that I remember in Chinatown, we have big trees in the front. Those are tamarind trees, if you know the tamarind. Because we live in the city we have no yard. I just play with the kids in the front.

You know, my dad open his office. We have the office at the very first floor and then we live on the second floor. And my dad is a very, very sport person. He know that if you exercise, you have a better life, you have a better health. So we belong to a club that we have swimming pool, we have tennis, so we do play tennis, we do go swimming every week, every Saturday and Sunday. And then during the holiday, he always take us to Vung Tau, probably like a couple hours away from Saigon for the beach. Because he believed that he works hard, he has to have some vacation time. So most of the time we go to the beach and some of the time we go to Da Lat, it's more in the north. Da Lat is very nice, it's up in the mountain. I remember some of the summer he send my brother and I there for the whole summer, we stay there with my aunt to learn more, to have summer school from our cousin and stay there for three month. It was boring. But it was beautiful, but I was so young to really appreciate the beauty of Vietnam at that time. Palm trees, coconut, we loved to drink the green coconut juice. When I see my country, I will see the palm tree with the beach, blue sea. And the north part of the south with the mountain, with all the beautiful girls with pink cheeks because of the cold so their cheeks become really pink. It's like blush. That's how I remember Vietnam.

Interviewer

Do you ever want to go back?

Namhuong Miner

We did go back. I want to go back. I went back in 1999 with my husband.

Interviewer

Can you tell us about that?

Namhuong Miner

Because I was born in the south so when we had the chance to go back we went to the north to see my parents' land. It was beautiful. We went to the old French quarter by the lake. It's very old and it's kind of not very clean. But we learned to appreciate the life that they went through there. So we went through Halong Bay, it was very beautiful. But I still have something that hold me back when I talk to the people there. It wasn't easy for me. It's not the same because I say if I want to go back and live, I want to go back to the Vietnam before 1975, not the one

after. Even though it's very open right now, it's not the same. People look at you like you are here, we want your money. I don't feel that connection, you know, when I go back. I feel like you are there and the people just want to extract money from you. But it's not like the Vietnam before, in my opinion.

Interviewer

If you were going on holiday in the countryside to Da Lat, didn't you drive by United States military people or villagers? How did you travel to Da Lat? The war is still going on.

Namhuong Miner

Sometimes we fly, sometimes we flew to Da Lat. It's only like an hour flight. And sometimes we drove by bus. I don't think I see a lot of American at that time. But I remember when you travel by bus, you see the Communists on the road but they don't do anything, they just let you go and you know that it's them and we just try to ignore them. If they don't do anything to us then we don't do anything to them. But I did see them.

Interviewer

The Viet Cong?

Namhuong Miner

The Viet Cong. But the Viet Cong from the south, not from the north. They have a group that mingle in the south. Yeah, we saw them.

Interviewer

Describe them.

Namhuong Miner

Because they wear black. You know, our soldier wear green. They wear black. They are all black. Their clothes are completely black and we know that's them. It's just instant, I don't know. We know that it's them. And then the people on the bus say, "Oh, that's them." So we know.

Interviewer

Were you frightened?

Namhuong Miner

Maybe a little bit but they didn't do anything to frighten us. We just go on our way. So I guess it's part of the country.

I don't see much of the countryside, we don't go much to the countryside. And then I went to (Yen Churn?)(39:53) a few times too and that's it. We don't go much out in the countryside.

Interviewer

So describe the Americans in Saigon that was building up and building up.

Namhuong Miner

I don't get in contact a lot with the American. I know that my dad, the reason he was with the anti-Asia Communist Association because of one of the Catholic priests happen to know his name and asked him to join the Association. He was advisor to President Ngo Dinh Diem. So that's why he came and asked my dad to join. And my dad say, "I just opened my office." He was a lawyer, it's probably like two years when he came and asked him to join. So he kind of hesitated. It took him a long time and finally they came and help him with the paperwork and everything, so he decide, okay, I go. So he had the chance to go to Taiwan for his first meeting there. But with American, I remember growing up in Chinatown, there is a lot of bars, that's how I portray the American; going there, drinking and have girls. That's how I see them. But that's all I can see at that time. At the time when my brother went on the exchange student to the state for his last year of high school, so he had a chance to go to the state on an exchange student program, we were able to know – I don't know why we know that American fellow, and then my brother took private English lesson from him. So he came to the house once a week by bicycle and give my brother private English lesson. And so that's the good American that I see. Otherwise I only see the GI in the bar.

Interviewer

Did you see them get into trouble?

Namhuong Miner

When they got drunk, yes. I remember one time one got drunk and just came and ring our doorbell. I think he was pretty drunk. So he just bang on our door and I was a little bit scared. So he left. Just that one incident.

Interviewer

What about your friends? Did they talk about the Americans? Did they say anything about what they thought about the Americans, your friends?

Namhuong Miner

I don't think we talk about them. We just talk about our life. They are there, but we don't talk much about them because we don't see them very much. I don't see the American a lot though. They mostly in the countryside

fighting but not in the city. They do have some in the city but I don't get to see them a lot.

Interviewer

What about Vietnamese people who were fighting? There were a lot of Vietnamese in the Vietnamese Army. What did you think of that?

Namhuong Miner

I have a lot of cousin that die from the war. It's painful. I know that every war is evil, but that's part of life and that's part of... of the war.

Interviewer

How did the Vietnamese at that time think of death when someone dies in the war? How do they treat death compared to a Westerner?

Namhuong Miner

It's painful but they feel like you die for a good cause. You fight for your freedom, you fight for your country. For a good cause. Even though it's a big loss but it's for a good cause.

Interviewer

Do you remember anything about the rubber industry?

Namhuong Miner

Oh, the rubber industry. That's under the French influence.

Interviewer

And are the French still around?

Namhuong Miner

They were, because I went to a French school and there's a lot of French teachers there. You know, instead of serving two years in the country in the military they would rather go to Vietnam and be a teacher. It's better. So I see a lot of them. But the rubber, to answer your question of the rubber, I don't know much because I wasn't born at that time when the French took over the country, but I know that they employ a lot of Vietnamese in the north to have the rubber plantation. But I don't know much about what's going on during that time.

Interviewer

In your school, your classmates were people who were well off too.

Namhuong Miner

Yes.

Interviewer

What happened to them?

Namhuong Miner

After they took over, I only had how many? Two girls and three boys in that group that we associate, we still mingle with them. That's all I have but the other friends I don't have contact with. And then some of them went different way after they took over, some of them went to Australia, some of them went to Hong Kong, some of them went to Canada. I still have the friend that I associate, she stay in Canada, and another boy. So two of them. So whenever I go see my dad in Canada sometimes I ring them. But I don't have much.

Interviewer

You said you miss that Vietnam before 1975. What is it you miss most about that time?

Namhuong Miner

The freedom. The freedom that you are free to do what you want. You are free to wear – I remember when they took over in 1975, my dad say even though we eat the things that we eat, we have to simplify our meals too. Because we go to the wet market every day, we have to simplify the things that we buy even though if you have the money. Because people are watching. You don't know who's watching you. And then when you cook, and people can smell it, and if you barbecue your meat people can smell it because meat was expensive. And my dad say, "Oh, we have to learn not to eat so elaborate like we used to." And we don't eat elaborate anyway. But when I cook some meat and he say, "Make sure you close the windows so the neighbors don't smell it." And we used to have a maid too, a housekeeper that does everything for us. We missed that life. And then I have to learn to dress different because my dad say now that the Communists is here you don't dress like you used to dress before. You have to dress like so that people don't see you. I miss...I don't know, it's something peaceful that I miss. It's not the same, you know? So that's the part that I miss. It's just the serenity, the innocence that not there. That is not there anymore.

Interviewer

You graduated in '75. What were they telling you in classes about what was going on around you and to your country? What were they teaching you?

Namhuong Miner

I was learning French history. That's the problem. We do have a few hours of Vietnamese a week and we learn about the old Vietnam history, not the present time, they don't talk about the present time, they don't talk about what's going on at that time. But they talk about the king and all the Chinese people that invade our country, that's the history that are learned from school. But not the recent war that was going on.

Interviewer

Would you consider your family patriots of the South?

Namhuong Miner

Yes. I consider my family patriot because he stayed. Because he believed that the country is still there. He believed that it would not happen, that the Communists would not take over. He believed that the Vietnamese government can hold onto the South. But after the ten years he has a different perspective about Vietnam.

Interviewer

Can you tell us quickly how that's changed? Your father's viewpoint?

Namhuong Miner

Because he was kept for ten years, it was painful for him. When he was in jail he has a space probably about six feet by two feet. That's all his space, his sleeping space and his living quarter, that's what it is. A room, you have probably about five or six or ten people, but that's his space. That's all he has. And he learned to exercise in one place to keep his body going and keep him healthy to last for ten years, spiritually, physically, mentally.

Interviewer

Is he alive?

Namhuong Miner

He's still alive. He's in Canada. He's 96 years old.

Interviewer

And do you have brothers and sisters here?

Namhuong Miner

I am the only one here in Utah. I have two brothers, a younger brother and an older brother in LA and an older sister in LA. And I have an older brother and an older sister in Montreal, Canada. And my dad stay with my sister.

Interviewer

Is your mother still alive?

Namhuong Miner

No, my mother passed away probably 16 years ago.

Interviewer

I'd like to hear you speak French Vietnamese.

Namhuong Miner

So you want to hear the Vietnamese?

Interviewer

The French?

Namhuong Miner

I will speak the Vietnamese. I have a northern accent because my family is from the north. (Speaks in Vietnamese)

Do you want me to translate?

Interviewer

Yes.

Namhuong Miner

I said, "I'm very happy to be here with you today to talk about the war in Vietnam."

Namhuong Miner

In Vietnamese also could you talk about why you love being here? What America has afforded you throughout your life?

Namhuong Miner

(Speaks in Vietnamese) I say I love America because it's a very beautiful country and there's a lot of opportunity for you to grow. There's a better future for my family and for my children.

Interviewer

And one more time, talk to the American GI who was over there. Tell us what you think.

Namhuong Miner

I think that that's a big sacrifice for them to go over there and to die for us. And I feel bad, you know, for all the mothers that lost their child during the war, the war that they don't understand; the war that they feel like they shouldn't be there. And I can see the loss that the family went through and the sacrifice that they had to make for another country. It's a big, big sacrifice. And sometimes you know, the war happen and we don't know why it happened. It happens for a reason. But we all learn and grow from that. And hopefully we don't make the same mistake again.

Interviewer

Do you feel like the war was a mistake?

Namhuong Miner

In my opinion, I don't think it was a mistake because the American came and help us, so we have many more years of freedom instead of losing the war at the Tet '68. So we last until '75. I don't think so. I don't think it was. I was grateful that American came and helped us. We learned a lot, you know, from them. I don't think it's a wrong, but I know a lot of people think that it's wrong. Every war's war.

Interviewer

Is there anything that you'd like to say to the GIs?

Namhuong Miner

To them, I know that it's because they have to be here, you know, sometimes against their will. But I just say that I'm very, very grateful for them and for the help that they give to us, to our country. And I'm sure that some of them don't think they should be here. But I can see a lot of GI that came to our country through stories that have a lot of love for our people even though I don't see them, but I heard that they really, you know, down to earth. I mean Americans are very casual people. It's a big difference with the French and the American. The French always looked down at us because they were, I don't know, at that time, we were under them for a hundred years. But the

American are more down to earth. They more casual. They mingle with you. They are friends with you. They're more friendly than the French. I appreciate that.

Interviewer

Thank you.