

Mey Sokuntheary English Translation\*

**1. Interviewer:** Leng Pheakdey

**2. Interviewee:** Mey Sokuntheary

1. I would like to ask you what is your full name--the name according to your official I.D.

Mey Sokuntheary: My name since I was little?

1. No, the official name on your identification card.

2. My official name is Mey Sokuntheary.

1. And what is the name you are normally called?

2. I go by Nary.

1. Do you go by any other names?

2. When I was little, I went by Thary... The name on my official I.D. is Mey Sokuntheary. And when I joined the Church, they called me Mey Sodary

1. Have you learned any other languages besides Khmer?

2. No, I have not.

1. Oh really! Do you know how to read and write Khmer script?

2. I can only write a little.

1. Okay. Where were you born? (In which hometown)

2. My hometown is Prey Veng. In the village of Rovia, Preah Sdech, Prey Veng Province.

1. And what year were you born?

2. I don't know. But in the year 1975 (The Pol Pot regime started '75), I was 7 years old.

1. Okay let's look at your I.D.

2. My I.D. is a guess.

1. It's alright. What year were you married?

2. 2007. It was prepared and arranged by my parents.

1. How many siblings do you have?

2. I have 3 brothers. I am the only girl.

1. Where do you fall in your family?

2. I am the youngest.

1. How old are each of your siblings?

2. My oldest brother was killed during the Khmer Rouge years. I don't know how old he was! In 1975 I did not have parents or anyone to tell me. My next brother, he is probably 50 years old.

1. Is he still alive?

2. Yes. He lives in the Monduliri Province. And my third brother, he died from an illness, <..>

1. Can you tell me what your brothers enjoyed doing when they were little? What did they like to play with or do?

2. They liked soccer. They didn't really enjoy studying and learning. I liked to learn though.

1. Do you know where your parents were born?

2. My mother was an orphan. She was born in Battambang.

1. What is her name?

2. Her name is Luon Uon. And my father was born in Prey Veng. His name is Ouy Chia.

1. And how old are they today?

2. I don't know. They were gone in 1975. And because I was so little, I did not know their age. My dad actually died in 1983 from high blood-pressure. But my mother was gone in 1975, and I don't know if she is living or dead.

1. So you are saying that from the time the Khmer Rouge invaded Phnom Penh in 1975 all the way up until now, you do not know what happened to your mother?

2. Yes that is correct. I do not know if she is living or dead.

1. But you are not sure what year your parents were born?

2. No. Because we were so little during this era and due to circumstances, our family was split up and we are now unsure of our history.

1. Also, do you happen to know the name of your grandparents?

2. I do not really have any information on my mother's parents, because my mother was an orphan. But my father's father was named Ouy... (she corrects herself and recalls his name) Y Kuay and my grandmother had two names: Mey and Suon.

1. Do you know if your parents have lived and stayed in Cambodia their whole lives?

2. Yes, they lived here their whole lives.

1. How was your situation when they were in Prey Veng? (When she was a child, during the regime)

2. It was difficult. We didn't have enough to eat. There was not so much repression, but there was not enough food.

1. During this time of the Khmer Rouge and many people were being killed, did you see anyone get killed?

2. No. But we would hear about our relatives and friends getting killed. I had uncles and family that were soldiers. During this time my uncle was taken and beaten. I did not see him and he never came back, so I don't know if my uncle is dead or alive. I have one aunt that ran away and came back, and she now lives in America.

1. Did you ever go to school when you were young, and if so which grade did you stop going?

2. In 1980-81 I was in first grade, and then started second grade, but my father died and since then I haven't been back in school to this day.

1. What was the name of your school?

2. It was called Kampuchea Bot(?).

1. Where?

2. I'm not sure. It was near the Chinese hospital in Phnom Penh--a community school.

1. Have you ever worked or done any kind of business or any job?

2. No.

1. So what do you do?

2. The work I have done is not official because I have not been educated. I clean and do housework, or do small work here and there.

1. So can you describe some things that are different now from when you were young?

2. Since I was 7 years old, my life was very difficult. Very very difficult. Then my father died and it was still so difficult. It was difficult until I married and had my own family, then it felt like I had a little relief. The most relief came when I was introduced to this Church, and God. Both spiritually and physically, my life to this day is better. No matter the circumstance, nothing is as difficult as when I did not know God in my life.

1. What are some of your likes and interests now?

2. I like to visit the members of our Church; I don't have time or means to go to the Provinces for vacation.

1. Okay what about food? What is your favorite food?

2. I like all food!

1. Okay choose a few you like.

2. I like boiled pork, fish head, vegetable soup(slaw ka koh), fried fish, fried lok lak--I like all these things.

1. Who taught you to make these foods?

2. No one taught me. I just watched and guessed myself.

1. So you would watch others and learn from them?

2. Well yeah, but I didn't really focus on what they were doing, and I learned from helping or just watching. People all have their own style of making food taste good for them, so I just did what I thought would taste good.

1. Another question: when you were little, did you like to listen to music?

2. Yes. I liked to listen to old Khmer music, like Sinsisamut or Serisothia.

1. Does any member of your family know how to sing or play instruments?

2. No, not that I've seen.

1. What was your home like when you were little?

2. We had a home after 1979.

1. Was it wood or rock?

2. Rock. There were many homes left and if one was empty you could take it. When my father died, they took our house because we did not know how to take care of it.

1. Okay, so when the Khmer Rouge was stopped, the Khmer people came back into Phnom Penh and saw the many houses that had been built by the Khmer Rouge, and they could freely enter?

2. We would take the houses because the owners had died during the Pol Pot era. We would take them and share with those who didn't have anything or anywhere to go. [I am confused with this next line where she says they would save medicine and I am not following who she is talking about].

1. Another question: do you have any skills or talents like making brown sugar or weaving?

2. No. I can only make ombok.

1. (laughing) That's a talent too! Teach me how to do that right now.

2. I'm now old and weak, but when I was young I could do it.

1. How do you make it?

2. You toast the rice until it pops, then two people pound it. Some people pound and some people like to scrape it out. I pound it.

1. Could you tell about a time in your life that was the most difficult to get through, and how you did get through it?

2. The hardest time was immediately after my father died and I had to go away with strangers.

1. Could you describe how it was difficult?

2. When I lived with strangers, I had no warmth in my life. I felt lonely, I didn't have the chance to learn, all I could think about was how much I missed my parents. It is difficult to describe how I felt because of how much I suffered. I don't think I could count all the difficulties. I sold potatoes and corn for them in order to trade for something to eat. So I didn't have any kind of salary or money of my own. I washed their clothes for them. I watched their children. But I learned how to manage money, rent out my house, and fix my problems on my own. Still it was difficult.

1. What about a time that you were the happiest in your life?

2. The happiest I time in my life was when I started my own family. If you have a family, you have warmth and strength. And when I became familiar with the Gospel my life was freed from troubles. Even when I have difficulties or struggles, I still am happy. Because when you know the Gospel and you know God, you're forever happy. If you are hurt in your heart, or struggling with work, or sickness you can have strength from your family and from your values.

1. Did you have a dream when you were little of what you would grow up to be?

2. Yeah I did, but I didn't achieve it because I lacked the skills and couldn't accomplish everything.

1. But what was it that you wanted to do?

2. I wanted to maybe work in an office. Or maybe sing. But it wasn't possible.

1. You wanted to be a famous singer?

2. I wanted to, but I don't sing beautifully.

1. Okay thank you so much for this interview. I will just take a couple of pictures and get the rest of the stuff together.

2. The things I shared in this interview are true. No lies.

1. Yes. So I am going to take a couple of pictures to send to BYU so they can put them on their website. Okay?

2. Okay!

1. Thank you so much.

\*Translated by Sarah Collins