

Name of Interviewer: Tho Do

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Name of Person Interviewed: Anh Hoang Do

Relationship to Interviewer: Father

Name **Transcript**

00:01

Anh: My name is Anh Do.

Tho: When were you born?

Anh: I born Jan. 1, 1959 in Binh Dinh. It's South Vietnam.

Tho: When did you come to America?

Anh: I come to America in 1981.

Tho: Can you tell me about your story from when you were little in Vietnam and during the war, and then how you came to America?

Anh: When I was young, me and my family, we live in the communist area. And the time I know that is 1966. It South Vietnam government try to help my family get out of the communist area and go to come live in Bong Son, and I live there and I go to school, and my uncle, all my uncle, and my family work for the south government.

Tho: Where was your mom and your dad?

Anh: My mom, my dad die. He get sick and die, is when I was young. And my mom still live over there.

Tho: She was not with you?

Anh: No, she is not with me. She still live in Vietnam.

Tho: But when you were little...

Anh: Yea, When I little she married again, with the other guy, and she have her own family. And I live with my grandpa. And after, the war in between 1966-1972, that's the war bad. So we moved from Binh Dinh to Nha Trang. And I live there and I try to work to help my family. I work as fisherman. So I work to help my family.

Tho: How old were you?

Anh: That time I between 15 to 19. That when I go to work. And when the communist take over the South Vietnam, that was 1975, and I try to escape Vietnam because when the communist take-over, they control everything. My life and my family live over there is bad. I always think of freedom, so I try to get out of Vietnam to go somewhere, freedom. So I have to. I try two or three times, but I can not make it. The Communist put me in jail for three times. The first time I got 6 months, the second time I got 3 months and the last time is about one year got one year.

Tho: How did you try to escape?

Anh: And I try one more time, to escape again. I go with me and all my friends, by little boat. It's about 25 feet long. We try to get out of Vietnam. And we go to the ocean.

Tho: When they caught you and put you in jail, what did they make you do?

Anh: When I was in jail, they put me in jail. The daytime they make me go to work, like the rice farm, and go to the jungle and get the wood, and do a lot of stuff in the daytime. At night time we get into the camp and they try to explain and teach me about the communist government. Because everybody the same thing. [pause] But, anyway, I tried to escape Vietnam and we, me and my friend, buy a boat, about 25 feet long. It cost about 500 dollars, like U.S. America, that's all I know right now. But a long time...

06:15

Tho: That was a lot of money over there.

Anh: Yeah, it is a lot of money. But I don't remember, it was a long time ago. I don't remember how much a Vietnamese dong, I don't know. I forgot, but I...

Tho: So you saved the money from working as a fisherman and got it?

Anh: Yes, we all put everyone a little bit money on it so...just about 500 dollar. So we bought the boat and take off. When we go out to the ocean, but we don't have enough food and the gasoline for the boat, and the people eat and drink on the

boat. So we stop by the other boat try to get help. A little bit more gasoline. But we hit the communist boat, so that's what happened on my boat. They killed my friend on the boat. We have 14 people on the boat. But one die on the boat. We have 13 people left on the boat, and we take off and run from the communist boat. And we run all day all night, about 3 days and three night. And we have no more gasoline, and no more food, so the boat die, engine die, and we got like a typhoon, a very big typhoon and they come in and it come and hit my boat, and I don't know where it is, but when the big ship went by from the Greece country, they help me and my friend on the boat.

Tho: Were there only two of ya'll left?

Anh: No, we have 13 people on the boat still alive. Thirteen people still alive on the boat. And Greece boat, big ship, and they pick us up and take me and all my friend to Japan.

Tho: Was it a navy ship?

Anh: No, big ship. A big ship boat. And then, they take me and all my friend to Japan. It take about 1 month on the ocean.

Tho: And they gave ya'll food and everything?

Anh: Yeah, and they, we live on the boat for one month and 5 days. They take us from there to Japan. It take about 35 days, and then when I come to Japan, and have this Japan government and the Catholic church, they help me and my friend go into the church camp. It look like a camp, but not a camp. Like a church but it have...

10:11

Tho: Like a refugee camp?

Anh: Look like a refugee camp, but not really. But the church, it has a big house, like a big house so we can live- all the people in the big house behind the church. So the Catholic Church people there, they help me and all my friend with food, clothes, medicine and whatever, hospital...

Tho: Wait, how did you find the Catholic Church people, or did they find ya'll?

Anh: Yes, they find me. They come, they get all the information on the boat before we come to Japan. And they pick me and all my friend up to the church. And they take care of everything. Very good. In the daytime, we go to the church and learn English and Japanese, about 3 or 6 months, we know how to speak a little bit of Japanese and English, so that why we get out and go to work part time to get a

little bit more money to send to Vietnam to help my family, even, we buy a stamp and write a letter and mail it to Vietnam.

Tho: What did you do in Japan, like to work?

Anh: I work in the factory, I don't remember. But, was some kind of part for the car and truck and work like a factory. But, I know the part look like for the car and the airplane, and something like that. All the steel part.

Tho: When you were in Japan, were you still thinking about the family members at home-the ones that you left? Did they want to go to America?

Anh: Yes.

Tho: How come they didn't try to escape?

Anh: Well all my family, the member that left in Vietnam, they try to escape too. But they have no opportunity, no chance. It's not enough money to buy the boat or try to go with someone else.

Tho: Well, did you have a brother? What about him?

Anh: Yes, I have a brother. They come to the United States after me one year. He go with my grandpa on the boat. His boat, is my relative boat. So they come to the Phillipines, and I come to the United States before them one year, so that's why I fill out the form to [sponsor] him and my grandpa come live with me in New York City.

Tho: When you got separated from your brother and your grandpa, were you scared? Did you think you were ever going to see them again?

Anh: Well, that time, I don't think too much about, separated and scared, because we were separated too many times, and we are in danger places too much, so I don't even think about scared or separated, because we were separated too many times already. So, when we are come together we have very happy, and that was opportunity for me to live together.

15:02

Tho: So going back to Japan, how long did you stay in Japan?

Anh: When the [unintelligible] boat take me to Japan, and I come to the church, from the first time to the day I come to the United states, it take about two year. That two year I live in Japan.

Tho: Was it easy over there, because the people were kind of like...

Anh: Yeah, Japanese people is very kind and very nice to me. And they are very good people.

Tho: So you like Japan?

Anh: Anyway, yeah, I like Japan, 'cause when you get out of the house and go somewhere, it's the same color, look like Asian people so, no racist no nothing, it's almost the same.

Tho: So when you were in Japan you still wanted to go to America?

Anh: Yes, I still wanted to go to America, because I heard America, before I go to America I had my friend and cousin there, so that why I try to sign the papers to go to the United States.

Tho: So tell me your story after Japan. What happened after Japan?

Anh: I left Japan to go to United States is 1981. I have a sponsor, his name is Arthur [unintelligible], his family live in Long Island, NY. He sponsor me.

Tho: How did he find you to sponsor you?

Anh: Because he is the one that is member of the church, the Catholic Church in New York. So that why the Catholic, they have a sponsor all the refugee to the church, and then they, whoever want take care us, so that's why his family choose me, and take care of me. So I come to live with him, and he helped me a lot.

Tho: How old were you when you came to America, about?

Anh: It's 1981, about 23, 24. It's about something like that. And I go to school to learn English second language.

Tho: Was it just a school for all the different refugees that came to America or immigrants?

Anh: Yeah, this is very different because...

Tho: Not like school like we go to.

Anh: No, I go to like community college, but they call it English Second Language. So I go there for the night time. In the daytime I work part time in the restaurant, and about 4...3 months, and I found out they have another school, they call it CITA

from Reagan, President Reagan, that time they spend the money to pay for the refugee school, so I go to that school, I don't know what is that but everybody call it CITA. I go to school for 3 months, or 6 months, something like that. And after that, I go to another school, like Institute...hold on...[in Vietnamese: wait] ...I go to school for occupation...that's I go to learn like vocational school, so I go for mechanic school and take me about 6 months to finish my class and then I go to the factory work full time. And I work in the factory about 2 year in Long Island.

21:10

Tho: In Long island?

Anh: Yeah, Long Island. My life is good now, so I try to get, help the family, like somebody else, so I decide to get married [giggle]...and then...

Tho: So when you came to America, was it different? How did you see the people? How did you feel? Were you scared? How did people treat you in America when you first came over?

Anh: At first I come to America, it's a ... it's look very, very, different, very sad because in Vietnam, we live with crowds of people, and when I come to Japan, I live in church, but it's in the city, so I can live very good, but when I come to United States, I live with my sponsor, he live in the town far away from the city, it look sad. So every time we want to go somewhere, we have no transportation, so we take a walk and ride a bike to bus station and train station so we can go to school, and we go shopping, and go to work. It's very hard in the very first time, and then, but then after that I feel okay, because I live a little bit longer, so everything is comfortable with me, so I feel okay after that.

Tho: When you first came over, did the American people, were they mean to you? Was there any racism or anything like that?

Anh: No, I don't see anything- they mean to me or they racist. They are very kind, very nice people live around where I live. It look okay to me.

Tho: So when did you get into contact with your brother to tell him to come over to New York with your grandpa? When did they come?

Anh: They come after...they come is 1982.

Tho: Did your sponsor help them too, or did you do it yourself?

25:00

Anh: Yeah, I do it myself. I do all the paperwork and give it to Catholic Church and the Catholic Church, they pay for them to come over. Go to a different one.

Tho: What else? So you were in New York for how long?

Anh: I live in New York for 1981 to 1983. It's after 1983 I move to Texas, it's 1984. Because I have my relative they live in Texas and they work fisherman, so I come to Texas to try to work fisherman, so I move to Texas 1984, to Anahuac.

Tho: Was Texas different from New York people?

Anh: Texas look good to me, more comfortable because of the weather. The weather is warm, and that's good for me. Better than New York, it's too cold. The people over here,... well anyway, the first time it's always have a hard time, but after that, everywhere it look nice and good, even right now.

Tho: And today you are still a fisherman?

Anh: Yeah, I still work fisherman. Yeah, and me and my brother we are live together and we still work fisherman in Oak Island, Anahuac.

Tho: Do you still think about the people in Vietnam- the family that you left behind- and do you still talk to them?

Anh: Yeah my family, and my relative, they still live in Vietnam. Sometime we send money to help them and write a letter to them and sometime we talk on the phone to them. Some of them good, and some of them is bad. The live over there, some of them good, and some of them is bad. Some of them have no job to work, and some of them have a good job to work, so their life still okay, but some of them have no job to work over there, and their life it look not too good, so I help them.

Tho: Is it your uncles, or who are they? Who is left in Vietnam?

Anh: All of my family, relative, is dead. Almost everybody die, only one left. But they are really old right now. Some of them too old, some of them get sick, some of them die because the war. They all gone, except only one left, that my aunt.

Tho: Do you want to go back to Vietnam, just to visit, or live, or if at all?

Anh: I went to Vietnam, one time, a long time ago. I remember sometime in 1983, sometime like that. I went to Vietnam and is when my grandma die, so I try to go over there, that 1983. And up to now, I want to go back there too, but I have no opportunity, so I just wait for whatever I have good opportunity I go back again.

30:05

Tho: Just to visit?

Anh: Yeah.

Tho: Can we talk a little more about the war, 'cause I just want to know, during the war, when there were bombs and stuff, were there bombs near your place?

Anh: Yeah, talking about the war- is bad. Because there killing and bomb, almost every day. Every day they fight, fight, fight, every day. Every day the people die on the road. Every day.

Tho: Did you have to hide from the Communist?

Anh: The war- we have nothing to hide [in]; we have no- where to hide. The war they just come where I live. I try to hide, but where do I hide? There is no- where to hide, because the war, the only thing is you escape the war. So you have to move from this town to the other town, a little bit farther than where-ever the war started. You cannot hide from the war, because the war, it come to your house, anytime any minute.

Tho: So when you escape the war, meaning like you ran to different houses in different towns?

Anh: Yeah.

Tho: Whose houses did you go to? Your relatives' houses or just random...

Anh: Yeah when the war, so we escape, we go to different town. This town, when they find in this town, so we have to move to the other town, far away, have to be far away.

Tho: And when you got to the other town, how did you know where to go, to stay, which house to go to?

Anh: So every time we move from the war, so the government, they take care of it. They escort you, they show you to where is safety to go. So, that why I still alive.

Tho: Did you ever see American soldiers? Did you come into contact with them? Did you talk to them or did they help you?

Anh: It 1968, I remember, I see a lot of American soldier. They live around in the town, so I know them, and sometime I come to them, and talk to them, and...

Tho: You talked to the American soldiers? How? You didn't know English.

Anh: We didn't know English too much, but we can speak a little bit [unintelligible]. A lot of American, they live around in the town, so they speak English, so we know we follow and speak a little bit. We know a little bit.

Tho: What did you talk to them about? Did you ask for help or food?

Anh: Yeah I ask for help. I ask for food.

Tho: How old were you?

Anh: Like 8, 9, 10 year old. Between like that. Some America soldier, very nice person. Very kind. They try to make friend with me, and they give me food. And they try to be friend.

Tho: Whenever you got caught, when they put you in jail, you just did your time and then they let you go?

Anh: It's really the time when I in jail, I never know the time I get out. Because nobody tell me the time I get out. But I do whatever they say; they ask me, they tell me to do. So every day, I just do whatever they want to tell me to do. And when the time I get out of jail, I don't even know.

35:21

Tho: Did you ever think, "I'm going to die in jail, or anything"? Did they feed you when you were in jail?

Anh: Yeah, we had like two times a day. We have lunch and dinner. But the lunch and dinner, every time is one bowl of rice, and another bowl is soup. That's all we had.

Tho: Is there anything else?

Anh: Well thanks, to God, I am here right now.

Tho: So you made a good decision to come here.

Anh: Yeah.

Skip [36:12-36:55]

Tho: What do you think about the U.S. government and war? About how they deal with the war, is it good or bad?

Anh: Well, I don't know anything about that, but I think that United States, the government is very helpful to the people in Vietnam. They are good and helpful for all the Vietnamese during the time during the war. The war without the United States, that's why the Communist, they take over. If there more American in Vietnam, so the Communist not going to take over.

Tho: So if there were more American soldiers in Vietnam, then we could have won? Or there wouldn't be any Communism?

Anh: Yeah, no Communism, if more American in Vietnam.

Tho: What do you think about the Vietnamese culture in the United States?

Anh: Vietnamese culture in the United States- all the Vietnamese should keep their culture in the United States. That why they have the holiday, or good opportunity for everybody come together to see the other so they can speak Vietnamese or yeah, that very important for them to keep their Vietnamese culture.

Skip: [39:26-to end]
