

**Name of Interviewer:** Jason Wang  
**Method of Recording Interview:** Digital audio  
**Name of Person Interviewed:** Cam Doan  
**Location of interview:** Austin, Texas  
**Date of interview:** September 18, 2008  
**Name                      Transcript**

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*Track 1-00:01*

Jason                      So the microphones are on now. Could you state your name and birth date and where you're from?  
Cam                        Do you need me to translate it?  
Jason                      Yes Please.  
Cam                        Her name is Cam Doan, from Vietnam, came Feb 25 1927, May 25 1947

(checking audio)

*End of Track 1*

**Name                      Transcript**

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*Track 2-00:01*

Jason                      When you were growing up, can you describe some of the things you did every day as a child?  
Cam                        She says she when she was a girl she went to school and enroll in social studies, and her daily activities she working with a charity organization  
Jason                      Can you describe what it looked like?  
Cam                        She say she grew up in a city, Hanoi, and she moved to Saigon. She work in the hospital.  
Jason                      You lived in a house? Apartments?  
Cam                        She says she work in Hanoi, a big city in Vietnam, she lived in a house, there's no land, there's no landscape or shrubbery, just like in the big city, she worked in a business in the house.  
Jason                      What kind of business?  
Cam                        Bakery. And later when she went to Saigon they opened a Pharmacy.  
Jason                      Did you go to school as a child?  
Cam                        Yes she said she went to school and finished high school.  
Jason                      Her elementary school, what time did you get out of school and what did you do after school?

*Track 2-04:07*

Cam                        After school she take care of her brothers and sisters- that's the time when she went to elementary school. She would go home and take care of her brothers and sisters.  
Jason                      How many brothers and sisters did you have?  
Cam                        3 brothers and 3 sisters  
Jason                      Where were you, how old in the family?  
Cam                        She's the oldest one

Jason What were some of the things that you had to do to take care of them?

Cam She take care of her brothers and sisters, like, give them showers, take them to work.

Jason Were your parents, did they just run the bakery all day?

Cam Yes, her father was working for the government, and her mother was taking care of the business.

Jason After high school, after you graduated, what kind of things did you do?

Cam After high school she went into the Social Service Department

Jason In the Social Service Department, can you describe your job?

Cam She working as a nurse in that department, and follow the doctor, around the area, to give vaccine to the population and also, if there are any special need, then, they take care of those.

Jason Did you get to travel a lot as a nurse, or did you work in the city?

Cam Just in the city.

Jason Was the hospital, did yall have enough supplies and equipment? Or were yall sometimes missing supplies?

Cam At that time, it's enough for that period, for that time, equipment for that time.

Jason How far after high school before the war started?

Cam She can't remember [laugh], probably 10 years or so

Jason When the war first started, what was it like? Did you hear about it on the TV? The Radio? How did you hear about it?

Cam The hospital moved her to another location and all the people in the city.

Jason They evacuated the whole city?

Cam Yes, the whole city evacuated

Jason Where did you move to?

*Track 2-09:30*

Cam They moved her to the countryside around Hanoi

Jason When the North Vietnamese came in, what was the fighting like? Did they bomb the camps or the city? Can you describe that period of time?

Cam There's 2 wars. When she grew up there was a war between Vietnam and the French. And later after 1964 there was a war between the south and the north.

Jason She's talking about the war with the French?

Cam Yes. She said at that time, she was in the countryside.

Jason Why was the French fighting against the Vietnamese? For independence right?

Cam Yes.

Jason What kind of things did the French do, did they invade the city?

Cam She said because she grew up in better conditions, so they don't see the hardship like all the people see during the French occupation.

Jason Did you have any friends that were poorer, or saw any of those hardships?

Cam Yes

Jason Did they talk about what it was like having to live under the French?

Cam They had to, those people had to evacuate, and not making enough for living like food?

Jason like food?

Cam Yeah, food, and general.

Jason When you were evacuated, and yall moved to the countryside, did it stay as like a city? Or did the government put up like a city in the countryside? Or did they just tell you to move?

Cam Yes, when they evacuated to the countryside, you had to find a house by yourself, just live with the locals.

Jason Did you continue to work as a nurse at the time?

Cam Yes she still worked as a nurse but later the rest of the travelling, but she refused to go. Like, they want move her further away from the city.

*Track 2-14:00*

Jason Did they move everyone else?

Cam Yes, whoever can go will go.

Jason What happened when you stayed behind?

Cam Just on your own.

Jason Did you see a lot of the French soldiers?

Cam Yes

Jason What kind of things did they do?

Cam Later she went pretty far from the city so she did not see the French very often.

Jason When yall were evacuated did your parents still work in their jobs? You said your father worked in a government position and your mother worked in the bakery, did they keep their jobs?

Cam Yes at that time they couldn't do any work.

Jason What did they do during that time? What did they spend their days doing?

Cam Do small business, like handicraft, whatever the local people do.

Jason Were you still taking care of your brothers and sisters or did your parents take care of them?

Cam Take care together.

Jason After the French War, what happened? Did yall move back into the city?

Cam After the war finished they went back to city and then, moved to Saigon.

Jason After you moved to Saigon did your parents go back to their normal jobs?

Cam Yes they went back to their own job.

Jason And did you continue working as a nurse?

Cam Yes, after she moved to Saigon she worked for the Social Department, more like a social worker, like a nurse.

Jason What kind of things does a social worker, nurse do?

Cam She said her class was about 13 people and they assigned each one to a different area, and during every day activity, they giving out medicine to every people, and once a week the doctor come and give free medical care to the people in that area.

Jason You worked as a nurse in that sense, how long did you work as that kind of nurse before the Vietnam War between the North and the South?

Cam 1964 She work as a social worker. At that time the war still not really started, but still fighting. Probably about 54 came to Saigon and the war really happened after 1963.

Jason So this is the North and the South?

Cam Yes

Jason So when that war started how did you hear about that? Did the government just come and tell everyone to leave or did you hear about it on the radio first?

### *Track 2-20:00*

Cam That time there's not many tv, just talk to people. Every week when war happened you just know it. By regular people moving around.

Jason So just by word of mouth?

Cam By word of mouth.

Jason When you heard about the war, what did your family hear?

Cam during the war come out, maybe just 1, each one take care of themselves. Place that they work, if the war in Vietnam did not happen, like, big war, mostly just happen in the countryside. In the city people just heard the news, people fighting here fighting there.

Jason The war, it just stayed away from all the main cities?

Cam Yes, at that time.

Jason When did the war move into the cities? How long was the war going on before it moved into the city?

Cam Probably a few years. The war come to the city in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. That's when the people in the city feel the war.

Jason Did the government evacuate the city again? Or did they just leave you to fend for yourself?

Cam This is not just on your own, so it's whatever war after what other city. That's probably, you get to evacuate on your own.

### *Track 2-23:00*

Jason Your mother was still baking and your father was still working for the government?

Cam At that time her father already retired and her mother too. They both retired. Just the children, brother and sister working.

Jason Were yall still considered richer, did yall have more money than most of the other people living in the city?

Cam They were better living conditions than other people in the city.

Jason Did the fighting ever come into your neighborhood?

Cam Yes, it come to her neighborhood, but she would evacuate when that happen. It happened in her neighborhood, like, the Tet Offensive.

Jason Was it just one period of fighting? Or did they keep coming back?

Cam Just one time.

Jason Did they damage any of the houses?

Cam There's no damage to the houses.

Jason Did you have any friends living in the city that were affected by the war?

Cam Several of her friends were affected by the war. They come and live with her for short period of time during the war.

Jason How many friends? Just a couple? Or were there a lot of people living with you?

Cam Two families living with her.

Jason What was that like living with two other families in the house?

Cam She provide food and shelter, and she provides

Jason Were you still working as a nurse?

Cam No, she left that job.

Jason Did you leave your job once the war started?

Cam Yes, after the war started she left it.

Jason What about your brothers and sisters, what were they doing?

Cam Her brothers and sister were pharmacists, engineer, lawyer and doctor. She opened a pharmacy and ran her own business.

Jason Were they affected by the war, did any of them have to leave their jobs? Did the government ask any of them to go help out with the war?

Cam They just do their professional job at that time.

Jason When the American soldiers came back to capture the city, did you see any of the soldiers?

Cam Yes she saw American soldiers in Saigon.

Jason What did they act like? Were they very professional? How did they treat the opposition?

Cam She didn't know what American soldier treat other people, but the one that she deal with in business is very professional.

*Track 2-28:45*

Jason I know that many of your brothers and sisters, they must have worked with the government, with the Americans too, was everything ok with them?

Cam She say very good.

Jason What stands out most during that time of the war. Do you remember anything specific? Any stories? What was the thing that you remembered most about the war? Was there anything that stood out or was everything pretty normal?

Cam she can't remember. She live in the city so, she can't remember anything special.

Jason Did you ever see any of the American planes flying past? Or American soldiers in the streets?

Cam Yes, she saw the plane and American soldier during the war she saw plane, they try to attack the rest of the city.

Jason The planes that flew over during the war, they were trying to bomb the rest of the city?

Cam No not in the city, in the countrysides, they bombing a lot of places, outside the city.

Jason But you would still go and find shelter and hide from the planes when they flew over the city?

Cam During the war in the city, that's when the war was really close to the city, then when they saw they planes they find a place to hide.

Cam Try to but can't bring back the memories from the war. But even though she couldn't recall much.

*Track 2-33:00*

Jason Was anyone in your family hurt by the war?

Cam No.

Jason Yall came out good?

Cam Yes

Jason What about those friends that came to stay with you, were they alright?

Cam They come out ok.

Jason Did you ever have to use any of your nursing skills to help out some of the other people hurt?

Cam Yes, she used her skills to help the neighborhood.

Jason So they would come to you when they were hurt?

Cam Yes, they come to her, and she told everybody in the neighborhood if something happen to come to her.

Jason What kind of injuries? Like, were they small injuries or what?

Cam It's not the big injury in the city, when they need medicine, they came tired, they come to her.

Jason After the Americans came and retook the city, was it pretty calm?

Cam Actually, the city never captured by the North Vietnam. It just, the war just broke out, just all over mostly in control of the Southern Vietnamese government.

Jason What happened after the American forces?

*Track 2-33:45*

Cam It was pretty normal place, she just doing her business.

Jason Your life just remained pretty normal throughout the entire war after the American forces left?

Cam It just normal, nothing happened in the family.

Jason How long after the war did you wait before you came over to the United States?

Cam After the war, or when the war happened?

Jason Did she come up to the United States during the war?

Cam After the war. The war ended in 1975, and she came over in 1986.

Jason Did you come over with a Green Card?

Cam She came here under the ODP Program. It's called the Orderly Departure Program. That's the program the US government set up for people who want to leave Vietnam and take a [unintelligible]

*Track 2-37:45*

Jason Were you granted automatic citizenship?

Cam After 5 years, with the Green Card.

Jason Did you come to America with the rest of your family or did you come by yourself?

Cam She came with her husband

Jason When did you marry?

Cam When she was 27 year old, so 1953.

Jason During the French War? Before the French War?

Cam During the French War, at the end of the War

Jason How did you meet your husband?

Cam Two family know each other.

Jason Do you have any kids? Children?

Cam Four Children.

Jason Did you have your kids between the two wars? Or during the North and the South War? When did you have your kids?

Cam [laugh] in 1957 so after the French War.

*Track 2-39:55*

Jason So were they all boys or did you have a couple of girls?

Cam Four boys [laugh].

Jason Was it really hard taking care of your children during the North and South War?

Cam Not to hard to take care of the children.

Jason Did you always find enough food, or clothes, during the war?

Cam Yes.

Jason Did you come over to the US with your children and your husband? Or just you and your husband?

Cam All her children were in the US, she came with her husband.

Jason Her children, they came to the US? When did they come to the US?

Cam During the, 1975, and during the 1980.

Jason After the war ended?

Cam Yes, after the war ended.

Jason What kind of jobs did they have?

Cam 4 Children, and 2 engineers, 1 architecture.

Jason What did the 4<sup>th</sup> one do?

Cam Technician

Jason During the war did they still go to school and all that?

Cam Yes, they still went to school.

Jason Did they go to college?

Cam They went to college, over here in the US.

Jason After you and your husband came over here to the US where did yall live?

Cam They came to San Antonio and her husband passed away after 3 months here in the US.

Jason Why San Antonio?

Cam Because she got her brothers living in San Antonio.

Jason You said you were the oldest of 6 children, how many of your brothers and sisters came over to the US?

Cam The others in France.

*Track 2-43:30*

Jason Did you stay with your brother when you moved here?

Cam Yes, she lived with her brother for a short time, and then moved to Austin with her children.

Jason Her children, your kids, they were going to University, what University?

Cam UT Austin [laugh]

Jason What kind of income, where was the money coming from at that time?

Cam She just make ceremonial cakes, formal cakes.

Jason Cakes? That your mother taught you to bake?

Cam Yes [laughs]

Jason I heard you had a restaurant around here?

Cam Not yet, not at that time. She just baking at home.

Jason What happened after your kids were in college, and you were making cakes at home, did you just decide to start a business?

Cam Her son started the restaurant. And later, like 99.

Jason Your sons started the restaurants but they were engineers? How did that work weren't they busy?

Cam She was known around Austin for making Vietnamese food.

*Track 2-47:00*

- Jason            Everyone around Austin came to you for food?
- Cam             Yes (laugh)
- Jason            Was it really hard for your kids to start the restaurant? Were there a lot of regulations that they had to follow? Or was it pretty easy for them to start it?
- Cam             Her children take care of it, she didn't know about that side of the business.
- Jason            You ran the restaurant as a family?
- Cam             Yes it's a family run restaurant.
- Jason            Do you have any grandchildren?
- Cam             Yes, 2 grandchildren.
- Jason            Do you like working at the restaurant? Do you still make food?
- Cam             Yes she loves doing business. Now that she's getting old she likes to do volunteer work for the Buddhist temple.
- Jason            What kind of things do you do at the Buddhist temple?
- Cam             She take care of the food in the temple, and show people how to cook the food. And whenever there is anything that needs help, she organize and help them.
- Jason            What do you think about some of the other restaurants in the area, I know that there are other Vietnamese shops in Austin.
- Cam             (laugh) There are many good Vietnamese restaurants in Austin.
- Jason            Did you say you used to volunteer a lot as a child?

*Track 2-50:30*

- Cam             Yes, when she was young she did a lot of volunteer work, social work, helping people and until now she's been doing that. And right now there's a Chinese family from Burma, and came from Philippines and lives in Austin and are refugees and she's been helping them.
- Jason            Are they just refugees from the government? Or is there some kind of conflict going on in Burma and Thailand?
- Cam             It's just, they are political refugees from Burma.
- Jason            When you came over to the US, on your green card, what was the process? Were you in Vietnam, and they mailed you a green card, and you got on a plane and flew over here?
- Cam             In the process, she got approved to come to the US. After that, came here, she got the green card from the government.
- Jason            When you came off the plane did you have to stay in housing? When you immediately got off the plane what was the process, did you have to go through immigration? Customs?
- Cam             She just went through the normal process of immigration. Then go to her family.
- Jason            Her family picked her up?
- Cam             Yes
- Jason            How much stuff did you bring with you from Vietnam?

Cam 2 suitcases with roses and books, and especially the small equipment that make cake.

Jason Did you ever use machines to make cake or were they all handmade?

Cam They all handmade (laugh). She make a great little small cake of roses that is in the shape of a rose, the shape and color, and elaborate of traditional cake.

*Track 2-54:20*

Jason Do you make Vietnamese desserts? Or any of the other foods?

Cam Everything, not only the US but everything else.

Jason What do you think about American food?

Cam Tastes good, but for the Asians it's not too bad (laugh). It's very good, American food.

Jason What kind of stuff did you eat back in Vietnam? What kind of foods did you eat?

Cam Mainly just rice.

Jason Did you have a lot of meat or fish? Or was that kind of scarce?

Cam In Vietnam it's less.

Jason They didn't have a lot of meat over there?

Cam Not as much as in the US.

Jason Do you like the US? Which do you prefer the US or Vietnam?

Cam She likes the US more.

Jason Have you ever been back to Vietnam? What was it like?

Cam It's more developed, but she don't feel comfortable or suitable over there.

Jason You just kind of felt out of place over there?

Cam Yes, out of place. She feels like the people, there's not many people that understand the background with her in Vietnam.

Jason Do you travel a lot on vacations?

Cam Yes.

Jason Where are some of the places you've been to?

Cam (laugh) France, Holland, England, Italy, Canada, Mexico, (unintelligible), California, all over the place (laugh).

*Track 2-58:00*

Jason You're enjoying your retirement?

Cam Yes. Her traditional philosophy is if you make 100, you spend 80, 70, and 30 to do some other things.

Jason 70% working 30% to have fun?

Cam Yes (laugh)

Jason Do you see your kids a lot?

Cam Yes.

Jason That's good. Do you have any plans for the future?

Cam (laugh) There's no plans. She's 83 now.

Jason That's good. I think that's it as far as all the questions go...

Jason What do you think about US politics? Do you agree with all the American ideals? Just politics in general?

*Track 2-59:45*

Cam Yes, in general she agrees with US policy. She went to most of the elections. She vote in most of the elections.

Jason Do you see yourself as more of a Texan or more of an American?

Cam (laugh) more American

Jason Do you remember anything, like, when you came over here, what was the hardest thing about starting a new life?

Cam She just try her best, and the language, and the driving are the hardest.

Jason Did you ever take the TOEFFL?

Cam No, she just studied English but not actually take the test.

Jason You sound like you have a pretty interesting life.

*Track 2-1:02:25*

Cam (laugh) She need to take some time to think, it's been a while... and another thing about her- she always try to overcome any obstacles or any difficulties, so she seems like everything is normal. She don't make a big deal, when other people have difficulties, it's no big deal.

Jason That's pretty much it.

*End of Track 2- 1:03:15*

**Excerpts**

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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04:07

Cam After school she take care of her brothers and sisters- that's the time when she went to elementary school. She would go home and take care of her brothers and sisters. She take care of her brothers and sisters, like, give them showers, take them to work.

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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06:30

Cam She working as a nurse in that department, and follow the doctor, around the area, to give vaccine to the population and also, if there are any special need, then, they take care of those.

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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18:00

Cam She said her class was about 13 people and they assigned each one to a different area, and during every day activity, they giving out medicine to every people, and once a week the doctor come and give free medical care to the people in that area.

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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25:37

Cam Several of her friends were affected by the war. They come and live with her for short period of time during the war.

Cam Two families living with her.

Cam She provide food and shelter, and she provides [in general].

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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34:13

Cam Yes, she used her skills to help the neighborhood.

Cam Yes, they come to her [when injured], and she told everybody in the neighborhood if something happen to come to her.

Cam It's not the big injury in the city, when they need medicine, they became tired, they come to her.

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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47:00

Cam She was known around Austin for making Vietnamese food.

Jason Everyone around Austin came to you for food?

Cam Yes (laugh)

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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48:30

Cam Yes she loves doing business. Now that she's getting old she likes to do volunteer work for the Buddhist temple.

Cam She take care of the food in the temple, and show people how to cook the food. And whenever there is anything that needs help, she organize and help them.

Subject: Helping Others

Name Transcript

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(50:30)

Cam Yes, when she was young she did a lot of volunteer work, social work, helping people and until now she's been doing that. And right now there's a Chinese

family from Burma, and came from Philippines and lives in Austin and are refugees and she's been helping them.

Subject: Life Philosophy

Name Transcript

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58:10

Cam Yes. Her traditional philosophy is if you make 100, you spend 80, 70 [percent working], and 30 to do some other things.

Subject: Life Philosophy

Name Transcript

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1:02:25

Cam (laugh) She need to take some time to think, it's been a while... and another thing about her- she always try to overcome any obstacles or any difficulties, so she seems like everything is normal. She don't make a big deal, when other people have difficulties, it's no big deal.

### Summary

In primary school, after school I would take care of my brothers and sisters, by giving them showers, or taking them to work... [older] I worked as a nurse, following the doctor around the area, giving out vaccines, or if anyone had a special need, we would take care of them... [older] Several of my friends were affected by the war. Two families came and lived with us. I provided food and shelter, and took care of any general needs. I told people around the neighborhood to come to me if they got injured... [now] Now that I'm getting old I likes to do volunteer work for the Buddhist temple. I take care of the food in the temple, and show people how to cook the food. And whenever there is anything that needs help, I organize and help them. When I was young I did a lot of volunteer work, social work, helping people, and until now I've been doing that. And right now there's a Chinese family from Burma, who came from the Philippines and are refugees, and I've been helping them... I've always tried to overcome any obstacles and difficulties in life. People don't often see that in me, I won't make a big deal out of it.

This interview was conducted through a translator, and the summary has been grammatically corrected for ease of reading. While interviewing her, one of the main things that struck me about her life was her absolute willingness to help people. As an 83 year old, she continues to give back to her community. From helping refugees, to filling the stomach of hungry college students, her legacy is in the people whose lives she has touched. She does not complain about hardships in her life, and takes them in stride, always moving forward with an optimistic attitude, and not dwelling on the past.