Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

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Today is Tuesday, May 8th 2012. This is Thuy Vo Dang with the Vietnamese American Oral History Project. I’m interviewing Mrs. An Thi Nguyen in Garden Grove, California

ATN: Will you speak Vietnamese or English?

TVD: I’ll speak Vietnamese.

TVD: First please introduce your name and your date of birth?

ANT: Age too? Ah ha... That is not recommended for women. (laughing sounds).

TVD: This is for history.

ANT: My name is An Thi Nguyen, born on May 3rd, 1940 at Gia Dinh, next to Saigon South Vietnam. I was born in a loving family and my parents love me dearly. My father is an oldest son of his family and my grandfather has two sons, my Dad and a younger Uncle. On my Mom’s side, my mother is the youngest daughter and also the 10th children of her family.

My Mom and Dad both loved by their families very much. I was born as the first granddaughter to both families, so everybody loves me. I live in a nice environment at a house which surround by a beautiful garden. There are coconut, guava, orange, tangerine, longan, bamboo and baby bamboo, it is so wonderful, so that I get spoil by love and full of what have been offered to me. I always get rewards to be a good student from elementary to grade 12th. I used to receive my certificate as my award each time at the school flag pole. Whenever I went down to the second place I was sad for the whole month until next month
I got back to my first place and I was happy otherwise I would be very sad. When I was little in elementary school, in the fifth or sixth grade, I already write good and my teacher would bring to Saigon to public in the children newspaper and I get pay for it. Back then in Vietnam if I can write for the newspaper and get pay, then working for the Asian Freedom broadcasting, and SBS broadcasting from Australia, I am book for a good life. People love me and please me. I get whatever I want.

TVD: So how many people in your family?

ATN: My family has 4 girls and 1 boy, and I am the oldest daughter. My youngest brother is an outstanding student, and he is spoil and loves very much by the whole family. He went abroad to study twice in America for PILOT. We had fun when we were young, and my happiness was receiving lots of awards since I am an excellent student. I am unbeatable for ping pong sport from high school and college. I was lucky back then when I was in elementary school, there is the ping pong club right across street from my school, and the father of Le Van Tuyet is the top one of Europe when he is only 17 year-old, so I went to that place at first when I was about 7-8 year-old, I picked up the ball when it dropped at my feet during my school break, and I just want to watch the game. Then later on my teacher, who is the father of the famous and also the top one of Europe for ping pong sport Le Van Tuyet, sees me and teaches me to play with both hands left and right. I went back to school and play with the girls using left hand, I still win. I use my right hand to play with the boys. Back and forth I always use the basic technique that I got trained carefully when I was young so being number one and unbeatable is so easy for me. I only watch the way people playing that game, how they use their hands and run back and forth until I have the ball in my hands I just play. That time I was so small my height was only above the table, but I run
like a squirrel. Later on I went to the competition using three strategies that mean it included 13 counties, at Vung Tau, Phuoc Tuy. I am the unbeatable of 13 counties. I remember the young lady Miss Huong, who competes with me as a teenager without parents or family by that time. At the final competition, I compete with the secretary of the Mayor’s office so she gets supporters, I am from the city and have nobody there to support but I win gloriously, I score fast for the first three games, and finish at a given moment, so they drop the last two games. That when I was young, I was determined to be successful for whatever I do and the word “failure” is not in my life’s dictionary. When I study law, I work for Cong Luan’s newspaper from senator Ton That Dinh and senator Tran Van Don. My destiny set when the event of the monkey year, I follow the red cross from special task force league 5 without fear, to pick up children on the streets while gun fired sounding. Most children are crawling on the streets because their parents are death. We put them at the orphanage. Going with the Red Cross with religious belief, I am buddist so I believe if I do the right thing, God will not let me die in vain. The league 5 of the special task force is the reserve league at Saigon. They come to wherever the battles effervescent. But in general all Vietnamese soldiers are magnanimous, very magnanimous, young or old, they are all magnanimous. I write from that time, the first time for medical help only, but I soon become the battlefield reporter without knowing it. I write for the Cong Luan’s newspaper during the war event in the year of Monkey, after that I write about the life of soldiers in the camp. I visit the general hospital Cong Hoa, it is bigger than a village with 4000 war-injured soldiers. The General Hospital Cong Hoa is the biggest hospital in the South Vietnam. All the injured soldiers from the effervescent battlefields transferred to Cong Hoa Go Vap Hospital 24/24 by helicopter. I use to visit them everyday. I transfer to work for
Hoa Binh’s newspaper from Cong Luan’s newspaper. I got a War Correspondent pass from each newspaper that I work for which has the first priority to go to any battlefields. The pass issues by two languages on both sides, English and Vietnamese and has the same order that read “All please provide the owner of this pass the most convenient transportations such as helicopter, boat, military car Jeep or any other transportation needed for her/him to be at any battlefields.” They checked my background very carefull before giving me the pass. They investigated my family back to three generations to make sure we do not have any connection to the communist or any family member in the North. I remember Mr. Nguyen Van Manh, leader of the military control center, signed on that pass for only two people per one newspaper company. Even your background is clear, the pass is not easy to provide just for anybody because going to the military bases is a very serious matter especially at the battlefields, and no women want to go because at those places they can face death and life at anytime. For example in the hot summer I go to Phu Bai which is an airport at Hue. Before going into the airplane to the battlefields, an army officer asks me: “Who is your closet family in Saigon?” so when anything happen that mean when an airplane got shot. When L19 searching, it flies over the top of the battlefield, if it got shot, it goes down and it is almost impossible to find the body. So they ask me if I have any family in Hue, at Saigon they know who my contact family is, but I was so young at that time so I never afraid of the death. I believe death or alive is the person’s destiny, if people die then so be it. I do not afraid. If people know before going into the aircraft that when it gets shot the body might not be in one piece, many people will stop, but I do believe in the religion which death or alive is a destiny, if I have to die then I will die. So there is a song “Fly into the fired war” when the aircraft gets shot while flying over the enemy base, the pilot by that
time is seargent Tran Ngoc Hoan, he flies the searching aircraft L19, and next to him is one riffe man with the gun ready to shoot underneat, and another seat for me as a war correspondent. Now Mr. Tran Ngoc Hoan still alive and live in Washington DC, he and his wife visit me sometimes here. Because I go into the fired war to get the real information without thinking about death or alive, just as the express car, we fly into the hot battle knowing that our lives can be determined only by second. The searching aircraft is very small. When it gets shot and fired, nobody can survive in one piece. When I was in the action war’s office they tell me that and I feel indifferent because I tell myself death or alive is a destiny. I do not afraid when I volunteer to be a war correspondent for Hoa Binh’s newspaper. When I left Cong Luan’s newspaper I work for Hoa Binh’s newspaper from the Priest Tran Du. He is the president of the newspaper and also a professor of Saigon Seminary University, he trains people to be priests. Most writers are from the North Vietnam who escaped from the communist so they actively against them. I maybe the only one from the South, it seems so because there are about two people from the South. Before I come to the Quang Tri battlefield, I have scholarship from Fellowship of Colombo Plan in Australia. When I get back from scholarship study, I ask to go to Quang Tri right on the next day. With the military control center, war correspondent is their first priority, not only Vietnamese but also for all other countries who come to report the real war. If they want to go anywhere, to the shore, to the mountains in the middle Vietnam, to the border of Viet-Mien or Viet-Lao, the military control center will provide them all convenient transportations. For example, to fly from Saigon to Da Nang, use helicopter to fly to Quang Nam, Quang Tinh, Da Nang, Sa Quynh or Quang Tri. From Hue to the mountain areas in the middle Vietnam, Ban Me Thuat, Kontum, Pleiku. From Saigon to the South West Vietnam
such as Bac Lieu, Chau Doc, or Tay Ninh. They provide aircraft for all the long distances, and car for the short distances.

TVD: How old are you by that time?
ATN: I was not old by that time. I was young but not too young.

TVD: What year is that? Is that in the sixty?
ATN: Uh, that is in the sixty because the fierced summer is 72 in the middle Vietnam. I have to admit that each place I pass by through out the country is really beautiful. Sa Huynh beach is more beautiful than I can ever imagine. But in that peaceful area, there are surrounding by death spirit. That means when I am at one side of the shore, I do not know if the enemy are on the other side. They can shoot me anytime and I can die at any moment. Each place has its own beauty. The middle part of Vietnam has special sights and people. To the South, anywhere I pass by people, they always offer me chair and food. To the Middle Vietnam, they are even friendlier to offer whatever they have. They cook their meal with more yucca than rice. They use bamboo chopstick to separate rice and yucca, they offer me a full bowl of rice, but I want to eat yucca. I see the kids, they are the grandchildren of an old lady at Quang Ngai, brighten their eyes when each of them receives a few spoons of rice from my rejected bowl of rice. I know they have to give up that bowl of rice if I eat it, so I told the lady that I do not want to eat rice, I eat yucca instead, so the kids are getting excited. They live in the countryside and have no opportunity to go to school but they are very smart. They are hungry because their parents get killed in the battle, at the countryside. There is no health clinic or any social activities to help people. I escort the medical group effervescently from the military to give free checkup for people there. I give them medication and cookies. I visit their houses and they invite me to eat with them very
formal. I act informally when I get invited, so when I see the small children, they want to eat rice so bad and I only want to eat yucca, they are so happy when I say that because that gives them a few spoons of rice for their meal. They love to eat rice but have no money. They have yucca from the back yard and cook with very little rice. This old lady is very hospitable, she uses the bamboo chopstick to separate the rice and yucca using the bowl makes from the coconut shell. They drink the coconut juice and use the shell to make the bowl. They are poor so they use bamboo to make tables and chairs to use. Their life is so simple, natural and earnest. They do not hide anything, what make them laugh, what make them cry, they act it out. That is the reason why people live in the countryside have long life, they naturally live with what life provided. People in the countryside live honestly and do not hold any grudge inside. The city people are polite they do not want to say something that makes people unhappy even that is the truth. But the country people say anything they like, if they are full or hungry, they say it. Even they live a hard life, they still live long because they never hold anything back, so living with them is very comfortable. When I give them medication, they are very considerated. They do not have money to buy paper, so they use the tree’s leaf for most things. They do not have electricity, so they use candles or use wood to warm up in the cold night. I love them since all their life they never see the lights from electricity. In the far area, they use water from the spring or dig the well to get water. They live long without electricity. Some people live up to 90 year-old. They dig up the yam, yucca, to hoe up ground, chop up the trees, to let off the birds for their daily living. They smile all day long from their own garden to the mountain and forest. All seem to be their heaven on earth. They live comfortably and hospitable. They love anyone who comes to them.
TVD: Where do you used to go?

ATN: I go everywhere by myself or with a group of people and meet people at the battlefield. There are beautiful love story when people meet each other at the battlefield. There are also wonderful love stories during war. My character is this when I work on something, I do with all my heart even before or now I focus and work hard until it is done. If one works on too many things, it is hard to succeed. For me, I never mind anything even though it is difficult I still get it done. As the hot weather in Kontum – Pleiku, it’s so hot and I have to wait at the airport for the aircraft to go to the battlefield at the North of Kontum, I meet a journalist from England, he is the writer of Synletitle newspaper, he is waiting for the helicopter if not he has to go with the pitiful aircraft which does not have available seat. One time I fly on the helicopter which carries death body in the bag. I seat right next to those bags, and sometimes the death body is overdated and the bag is not completely seal, when it slides back and forth, the smell comes from the broken seal make me realize those bags contain death bodies. I am very calm to feel close to the people who die while I surround by them in the same aircraft. These kinds of aircraft do not have seat, I have to seat on the floor. Not too many female are war correspondents, so I experience lot of things. There is another one named Phan Trinh Mai, she is a female military parachuter, I meet her in the Middle Vietnam sometime and she also comes from the Middle Vietnam. She gets discharged later and lives in San Jose now. Out of 20-30 war correspondents that I meet, there is only one female journalist. Female war correspondent at the battlefield is very rare. Because it has to do with personal charistiristics, one must like to do it otherwise it can not be done.

TVD: How are you going everywhere like that when you are a female by that time?

ATN: I am not married and I have my belief. Many people saying that how an unmarried woman is going to the military base like that. The soldiers at the battlefield have very good
maners. They live the life as a thin little thread on the bell any pressure can break it at anytime. It can be a bullet through their heads or their hearts that they will die. So they just want to fulfill their duties at the battlefield, they are more worry about the enemy in front or from the back, even west or east, they do not have time to look at a woman or a man. They must complete their responsibilities. When I am at the different battlefields, from the hot battle to the West or through the East, never have anyone treat me impolite. For example, the Vietnamese tradition when the men see women, they donot hug or shake hands or put their hands on women’s shoulders. From the lowest rank of soldiers to the general, nobody treat me impolite. Nobody even put their hands on my shoulders or my head. There are some people as old as my Dad or my Uncle, they keep the distance and treat me like their own daughter. They are really nice and have good maners. First, I am a journalist, I can write about what I see. Second, there is a chance to interview the President in the life of a journalist. In the battlefields, the journalist interviews from the lowest rank of soldiers to the Generals. When they go back to Saigon, they can be acquainted to the Priminister and the President. So if someone is not polite to the journalists, they can tell about that when they have the chance with people they know, but the soldiers at the battlefields absolutely have good maners. Even though some soldiers when they come back to the city, they go drinking or having fun and sound outloud, but when perform their duties, they are very nice and polite in general not only Vietnamese soldiers but all the Generals and others too. The Australia soldiers too. I know one Australia Royal Division who goes to Vietnam. Many of them are going to work at the social event such as medical or the Tiger Division from Korea. I know one of the Royal soldiers from Australia going to the Vietnam battlefield to help people with medical needed. When I go to study at Canberra
the capital of Australia, right at the center of Australia Royal Military, so I go to visit him and he is very happy. When I study in Australia, I write a very long reportage and send home. The Australia Embassy translates to Vietnamese everyday and gives to Mr. Morris, the Ambassador at Vietnam by that time. When I come back, the reportage already sent to Vietnam from Australia, so he invites me to the Embassy, he says he reads that and it is very touching. He invites me over his house for diner, so I am honor. In addition to that after the event of the year of Monkey, there is an Australia senated delegation goes to Vietnam, a senator named William from Sydney. When I come to Australia to study, I come to Sydney one week, before going to Camberrra everybody is going to different states. I contact the senator. He is the senator of the United Australia, he sends his children to pick me up and throw a party, then invite me to stay over his house. The medical group comes few days later, in that group there are some doctors already went to Vietnam and invite me to that group. Many doctors speak Vietnamese while they were in Vietnam. The special of that group is they speak Vietnamese. They give me a warm welcome. Australian’s face is cold because their root is England, but their hearts are warm. So they invite me over their house. I am only a journalist in a small country, and they welcome me ardently like that, the senator and the professor, all the doctors who had been in Vietnam, they all make me feel so warm. Before I come back home, the Australia TV invites me for a show. Australian people really help me a lot.

TVD: So how long are you staying in Australia?

ATN: I stay until the end of my scholarship. The scholarship is for 4 years, the fellowship is shorter, study after university program. Wait for me a little bit....

TVD: So you are talking about study abroad in Australia.
ATN: Study abroad during the war time honestly I have scholarship and do not know anybody there. The scholarship to Da Lat, I write very long two series reportage, about the Da Lat Military Training and the War and Political University for soldiers. I study in Australia while they public those long reportages. So many people give up their lives for me to study abroad or going to school. In Korean, people have to serve in the military for 2 years right after grade 12th whether man or woman, but in Vietnam, woman does not have to serve the military as duty but as her own choice. Because of my work as a war correspondent so I know most of our country alliances such as America, Korea, Australia, Itali and Poland, and I see how all the young people give up their own freedom to go everywhere to protect world peace. If America and Korea are not sending their soldiers to Vietnam, Vietnam and Cao Mien would be lost for a long time instead of enjoying our freedom over 20 years now. That's why whenever I go to a faraway area like living in France in the 60's, I always remember how many soldiers give up their freedom to provide me with that opportunity to go to study abroad. If not for their work, I can not go to the West for study, go to France to work, go to Taiwain and Hong Kong in the 60's. I have scholarship to study abroad because I earn it by passing the tests. The Australia Embassy gives out the test subjects and sends to Australia to grade. All students go to study abroad about Colombo Plan are excellent students, I am not saying I am such excellent but all students are the best students. The Embassy grades the tests and sends to Australia University to grade too, so it is very fair that who gets selected must be the best.

TVD: What is the name of the University?

ATN: The school named Camberra which is the name of the capital too, beautiful mountains and forests. In Australia University, the leaves are so beautiful whether it's green or yellow.
What a beautiful school! As a student studies science on the other side of the forest has to pass by the wood to have meal. For example, I have friends going to study in the same group, I ask them to join our meal and have to get the food ready, they come to eat and heading back, and I do the same if they ask me to join their meal. Life is beautiful! I save the extra money from the scholarship to buy gifts for my family and send to Vietnam. By that time I dream that all the young people would go to study abroad instead of going to the army, study abroad open up the creative ways to improve our country. But when I go back to the battlefield, I come to the Middle Country in Quang Ngai Nghia Thuc that is the free private school. I love the children very much. Oh God! They go to school from the mountain, and walk with barefoot and still study well. I go to lot of places, so I love our people and our country so much. They are so rustic, good-natured and morals. In the countryside, a chicken run to other village or to other house, they still know where to take it back to the right owner. In 60-70 decades, people are very pure. For example, their papaya is ripen on the tree, they pick it and give to people next door. Orange and tangerine too, whatever they have, they share to others who do not have it in their garden. They live purely and nice, natural with their hearts, so the children in Vietnam have to thank their parents and ancestors because they teach them never take away things from others, never take over things from others as their own. They never teach us to live that way. How to live a useful life for the society, help others, not to live only for your self. So the life in the countryside is far different from the life in the city, but the city life in Vietnam now is different from before. I see the hardest thing in life is human. The broken machine can throw away and buy another one, but a bad person can not throw away, because it still bad wherever he or she be. So grandparents and parents teach their children when they still young, my mother
took me to the temple to learn when I was 3 year-old. When I have lot of toys because I am
the first grandchild born in the family and our family is big and rich, so I get lot of gifts, my
mother takes me to the orphanage organization to give my toys. I select whatever I don’t
play anymore and not the broken toys, not a doll without legs or hands, but a nice doll. My
parents always teach me that if I invite people to eat anything, I have to select nothing but
the best to offer. If not I should not offer them at all. For example, our fruit trees, we pick up
about 5-7 ripen papayas, very sweet and select the biggest one to give out. We eat only the
small ones. Even at my age now, I still remember my mother teaches me that when I do
something or pick something for a gift, I have to respect and treasure people who receive it.
What I want to offer to people must have to be good, the ones that so so I should keep it.
For example, my mother tells me to invite people first, offer them the best first. From that
lesson on I adapt well to the younger organization such as the Red Cross and buddist-
family. Those organizations train people to be good to others, not to one self. Like a woman
in the family, serve and love parent-in-law as her own parent, love her husdband and her
children more than herself, how her family not to be happy. I love all people around me
such as I work sometime until 3-4 hours before having a meal. I see people get off work
with a blue face, I know they are hungry or not to eat yet. I ask if they want to eat, I even
offer my meal and leave just a little for me and make sure they are full before I eat. I have
been eating for years, but people who are working for years still here to work. All because
of me, they love me and I love them as my own family. Whoever comes to work, I tell them
that everybody here is a member of the family. Do you know I dream that I should do
something for them even a small thing that I need to be done. Like when I am in Australia, I
know a lot of professors in the university. They see the battlefield at plateau so dangerous,
they want to help me to stay by extended the scholarship. Naturally when I see the raining season in Australia, there are many jeeps pass by the school with lot of young faces and their eyes are lighten up inside the car. I think about million of young Vietnamese are in the battlefields. I know if I go back, I may not have a chance to go again, but now I am a war correspondent, I have to go because of the communist or I must be in jail. When I work for Hoa Binh newspaper, there are only two newspapers that time. Two Catholic newspapers: Hoa Binh is from Father Tran Du, Xay Dung is from Father Lam. Even though both are Catholic newspapers, Hoa Binh is larger than Xay Dung which published 2 million newspapers everyday. I am very fastinated with my work, wherever I go, I love all people I meet. Why? I treasure all people I meet because I do not know if I ever have a chance to see them again. One may die if the aircraft falls at the battlefield. Second, they live in the effervescent battle, nobody knows what to expect, so I treasure every minute and second. Even now when I meet anybody, I have to treat them with grace, I have to be sincere with them, and my sincerity must come from my heart. I will tell them truthfully, and do not hold anything back. I have a very interesting life. I know people from the North, the South and Middle Vietnam, from religion such as Buddhism, Caodaism, Hoa Hao, and Protestant. I am lucky that I know many biggest religious leaders. When I was a little I already knew the President, I sometimes now still contact Mrs. President Nguyen Van Thieu we talk on the phone. So if I create conflict with them, they are not going to give me their contact number, and if they hate me, whatever I want to do for them they may not accept it. I have a period of time to teach at Van Trung Culture Military School. This school is surrounded by military so the students are all military. All students go to the army after that. I am to be moved when I see them now. They still remember me. I am a very serious teacher. My students are
very good from my teaching, but I am very strict, not to joke around, study is study. I teach them when stand for the lesson, they have to stand straight to be a man, not to bend down for anyone. Even they are young only about 10-11 but I want them to rise up to be a man. I was very young, in the early twenty when I teach. I train all my students not to bend down, shoulders must be straight. I love my students, I teach right at the training center for military’s children. I still remember a student named Duong Tri Le, very skinny. His dad is only a sergeant. One time he is late, I scorn him and I do not know why he is crying until I know he has to sell icecream because his family is so poor. I love him and his family. He is later become a lieutenant, goes to the battlefield, and sends me a letter. He is at the effervescent battle. I receive his letter before the telegram reports that he died in battle at the West. He is thin and dark, his eyes are so bright. I still remember he carries the icecream box on both sides of the bicycle. He sells that to help his dad to support the family. His dad is a sergeant and has 8 children. I feel deeply pained by the love for his family. Now I still write letters for my former students. I want to find that student’s family where they located so later on if I can help I will help them out. His mom already died when giving birth, I feel so sorry. I remember each face and each place that I passby. My memory is pretty good. I remember many afternoons waiting for an aircraft at the front base, going on solace when I am in college, bringing candies, cookies and letters from the rear to the battle front. Carry on a big bag of letters, but only one lieutenant can read it since he is from the capital. The rest is from the mountains. Do you know, standing on the mountain at the front base, I see many mountain people carry basket of yams on their heads, they walk like this on the hills and the basket is not falling. People in the mountains, they always go with their families. For example, their battalion has 100 people, it becomes 500 soldiers, Oh no, that
500 includes their wives and children. Only single one is the lieutenant or the officer who graduates from military education, speak and read Vietnamese. The rest of people speak other dialogue. However, the Vietnamese soldiers are very determined to serve the country. I tell you the case of Le Thanh Y, surgery of M79, a bullet goes through a soldier’s leg and he is in the early twenty. American doctors do not dare to do the surgery, but Dr. Le Thanh Y says when I freely take an oath to become a doctor I mean I live to save the life of others, not my own life. Do you know what happen? At the Kontum base where he performs the surgery, he asks to be surrounded by the sand bags to leave a hole for his eyes and his hands to work, if the bullet blows up, he only lost his sight and his hands. Can you imagine a doctor without his eyes and hands? So the night before the surgery, he goes to Pleiku, a city next to Kontum to have diner with his friends who are also doctors. They all wish him well with the surgery as expected 50/50 chance of dying or loosing 2 arms and his sight. Dr. Le Thanh Y is from a tribal and his tribal leader called Thay Mo asking everybody in the tribal kneel down to pray during the surgery. When he takes the bullet out from the soldier, a dynamite specialist throws it out to the open area, it blows up very big. The whole tribal keep praying and cry because they think he is either dead or lost his sight and arms after the burst, but the surgery is successfully done. There is an America’s newspaper in Vietnam reporting military information. They publish about Dr. Le Thanh Y. A talented artist, now he is a doctor in Canada for the special task force. Dr. Le Thanh Y and Dr. Ngo The Vinh are friends, sometimes I fly to Pleiku during the fierce summer and everybody evacuates without food, only eating the package rice from the military. There is a military dentist named Nguyen Tan Sy, he is here now and becomes a pharmacist. His family is evacuating by that time so he takes out all the food in his refrigerator and give to
the journalists. It is very touching because of the war, smoke and fire everywhere and wherever we go, there is no food, no water, some people pass out because of that. For a normal life, we see water, rice or bread we do not think we need those, but in a city without people, everybody evacuates, a piece of bread, a piece of yam, a drop of water or a half of glass of water we all need it. As a journalist at war, I do not think about that. I do not need food for how long and wherever I go I tell people if I am hungry and people used to give me food. There is a time when I fly from Pleiku to fire-power 5, a base close to the border of Vietnam-Lao, the pilot tells us that the airway is getting bombing, so he drops us fast and we have to run because he will fly back right away. He and Dr. Le Thanh Y are going to Kontum direction. Lieutenant-Colonel Phan Van Huan, Mr. Thong who acts in the film Nguoi Tinh Khong Chan Dung, Dr. Ngo The Vinh now works at VA hospital, all welcome me. That place people all live in the basement, including the hospital where the patients rest they put sand bags around to prevent the bomb attack during their recovering time. People at war they love each other more than their spouses and family because the death happen any minutes around them. It may be a minute or half of a minute to die or at anytime. I tell you a very emotional story. A journalist named Liem, he works for the military radio communication at Hue. He talks to me so many times that he is waiting for his children to enter the university and he stops working and go to the temple, shave his hair to be a monk. He loves to go into the monastery. That day, a group of journalists and I are waiting at the Huong Giang hotel for helicopter. A group of people are following the military parachuters, other group is following the military infantry. When they come back in the afternoon, Mr. Liem goes with the first group he carries the recorder and camera and gets shot. He dies and leaves behind his wife and 8 or 9 children with more than ten
grandchildren. We come back and see him lying on the camp-bed from the radio station, his eyes closed on his peaceful face. He dies so sudden that he does not feel a pain or sickness. His face is so calm. We just have coffee in the morning, only few hours in the afternoon, he already lied straight there no more talking. The journalists at war love each other very much because we do not know if we can live up to tomorrow or not. We fly together in the morning in the same aircraft, but in the afternoon we do not know if we can fly back together. What if the aircraft drops, how we go home. There is a report about fly over the fire that I write when I fly the aircraft L19 and the witness is Lieutenant Nguyen Ngoc Hoang, he lives in Washington now. I actually go there and truly write what happen not adding any literatural style. I escape and do not sucess, and the communist calls me to go to the training camp, but in the training camp, there is only dying not gonna be survive. They say only 30 days, but nobody goes home after that. I hide from house to house, people let me stay and I am moved by that.

TVD: On 1975 is that right?
ATN: That is on 1975.
TVD: Where are you by that time?
ATN: At Saigon. I am at Saigon in 1975 because my hudsband is not going, he is at his military unit by that time, but I have many opportunities. I know the Embassy, many journalists, and there are lot of American Airplanes, having one more person coming along is not a problem. But I do not go because I wait for my hudsband, but he does not want to abandone his military unit to come back home. There are lots of ships and big boats but only loosing the direction. I learn one good thing about love, the 1975 war, many people stay back to be in jail because their families. There are many people not going because their parents are not allowed to go. Children also lost
and do not want to go. If only that they have known the communism is destructive, taking revenge and revenge with dark deep black such as children of the soldiers or in military are not allowed to go to school. So the second generation is illiteral, their parents are excellent but their children are not going to school how can they be good? They check their background up to many generations so the South Vietnam people if they know them well, they already left the country and sponsor all their extended families. But the South people do not know, only the North people who evacuated know, because there are people denounce publicly in the North, their land and property had taken away so they understand, not like the South people. They live with the vast meadow rice; their lives are so relax. Whoever come to the South always see that. I have friends in My Tho, and they only use the net container to pick up fishes to eat, so life is comfortable. Their comfortable life makes them unaware of the communism. They are not sure of going or not so they have to suffer when stay back. There is an attempt to get many officers for 3 days re-education camp but it turns out to be more than 3 years. Some are added to more years in re-education camp. They fell into their trap without knowing. What they do not know about communism cost them unlimited terrible time in prison. Even what they say in the prison if not suppose to be communism type then they must suffer the hell out of it. South people are unaware of the communist things that could happen in their life. If they have known like the North people, they know how the communist is and evacuate the first time about 2 million people, and that 2 million generation grows to more and more generations. They are sure to tell their children and grand-children about communist. So you see, there are lots of rivers in the West of South Vietnam, people only use their small boats to evacuate to the rescued ships out there, there are rescued people out on the sea waiting too. They do not understand communist as much as the North people, so it is so emotional that most of them are ended up in jail.
TVD: So Do you stay back because of your husband?

ATN: He is not home yet so I have to wait and hide from house to house. I do not stay at my house, and other people let me stay at their house for free especially the situation is so new the communist does not know how to check each house or each person yet, so I can stay out and escape. I go to Binh Ba islands in Nha Trang because I know someone there. I take a small boat to go out to the sea border and American boat picks me up and takes me to Phillipines. I stay for 2 months in 1976, coming to Phillipines in August and to America in November 1976. According to international law, what nationality of the boat rescues people out the sea, they have to go to that country. For example, if Fineland boat rescues people, then Fineland Delegation has to accept those people to their country. If American boat rescues any people, then American Delegation has to accept those people to their country. So that's how it works. For me, I am spoiled in the family when I am young. I come to the orphanage organization, senior home, field combat hospital, Main Republican Medical, so I can see all in each of the different angles. I can say our people born in the war and live every second and every minute to rise up for survival. Do you know how hard it is? This generation does not know how difficult for their parents to face the war. Everyday when a newspaper comes out, there are many young people died and one died right after graduated from college with the best of honor. They just in the early twenty, not even married. What sin that they commit? I go into the deep forests and mountains in Kontum, there are people in the twenty, they carry the gun, but it drops because they have malaria. In the deep forest, malaria is spreaded to everybody. It is shaking people up and they can not even carry the gun and they have to suffer until it is gone. The soldiers based in the forest are having lots of difficulties. For American soldiers at the battlefield, there is
helicopter drops block of ice for them to drink in the summer. Not for Vietnamese soldiers, they do not have such a treat. American soldiers before going into the enemy area, there is bombing fire to clear that area before they arrive. Vietnamese soldiers have to give up too much. The battle in the South, if you come to the parliament library, look for my book “To Fight A Miserable War,” take my report which publish on Hoa Binh newspaper, parliament library still keep that record. Otherwise, how can we remember the date, the name of each one, only based on the parliament record, one thing that all documents saved by the parliament library, so my writing about “To Fight A Miserable War” is actually 100% truth, not adding anything or seating at Saigon to write about the forests and mountains. I have to be there, I come to the stream area I am so thirsty so I drink water from the stream.

TVD: Do you say your husband is a soldier too?

ATN: Uh, at an area in the Middle Vietnam.

TVD: How do you meet him and in what situation?

ATN: I meet him when I go to the Middle Vietnam.

TVD: Do you remember what year?

ATN: 72.

TVD: Do you live in Hue in 72?

ATN: I meet him there, on the last month of December 1974, I have my wedding. So I know him for 3 years. He is only a military officer.

TVD: What is your husband name?

ATN: Should I put his name on? Nguyen Phuc Vinh Tung, from royal family: That noble family lives in Tung Thien Vuong mansion. The King Minh Mang has one prince. The prince Tuy Ly Vuong mansion is the home of scientist Buu Hoi. The King uses that mansion to put
alter of the prince Tung Thien Vuong both princes belong to that mansion. I spend half of my life for the war as talking about that now. My life here after the escaping, I pray that I can do something to help people back home. Those are the handicapped soldiers and widows from the war. I work and earn only $2.10 per hour from a university. Every month I send home money, a gift box about $50.00 included clothes materials, vitamins and $11.00 stamps. I send a little for each of the people I know. I go to school, wake up at 6:00AM, I arrive at school at 7:00AM. There is a 24/24 hour classroom in school, so I study there. I start to work at 8:00AM at school. I have class from 10:00AM and study hard until 10:00PM to go home. I work as Staff Writer for the Hornet newspaper in Fullerton. I study in Fullerton also I am the President of Fullerton Students. I also work for the Tighten Newspaper from Cal State. I write a lot of articles about Vietnam War as Staff Writer there. I have been fighting and never stop fighting for Human Rights and Democracy for Vietnam during the time I study there, because I am the witness and I see the real war with my own eyes. So all other student organizations join in to fight for freedom, democracy and human rights because the next generation includes boat people and many have died in the ocean. Most students in Cal State Fullerton, Fullerton College, Cal State Long Beach and everywhere, they all have family or relative members in the army, even the most reflected school like Berkely, I lecture there, and I see the student’s spirit. They understand a lot and they have a lot of questions about politic. Back to school, I am the speaker of Cal State Fullerton, so I get invited to give a talk at Cal State Long Beach. The educated students only ask me about small business, unlike my special talk in 2009 at Berkely, 10 out of few dozens of people, each can ask 5 questions, they ask up to 4 questions about politics. So the level of students in Berkeley is far different since Berkely is the main driven school, their
vision is different, but they are wrong when they against the war before. Why they are not against the war from Ha Noi, Russia, Czechoslovakia, provide weapons for Ha Noi. They are only against the South Vietnam. I went to North Europe later because I am the board director of YMCA Chapter from Orange County, I also the board of director for Forgettance P1 Foundation from Professor Jim Brasa, President, at Portland University. Besides those work, I commit to more from other organizations too. So I go to North Europe to have meeting for ASAE, NGO which about Asia and Europe. For country like: Norway, Nordic, Denmark, Poland, Holland, all North countries who extremely against the Vietnam war before. They support the North Vietnam before, but they do not do anything when they see the social communists kill people massively. Even the Prize for the monk Quang Do, the Prize from Norway that person comes to the temple, but can not even give it yet, and he sends his disciple to go with that person, the communist arrested him right away. So for educated people who dream about communism as heaven on earth but after 1975 they go back to Vietnam, they do not see heaven but it is hell. They send their aid for Ha Noi before, Norway sends aid to North Vietnam, Swedeland sends aid to North Vietnam to against the war and they are against all other wars, but they do not understand how the war happen. Why they do not against Russia and Czechoslovakia. While people in the North go hungry like in North Korean when I come there, most people are so thin, so small. Why they do not against China to provide aid for Russia, they should provide for North Korean. My belief from time to time is all knowledgable people, scientists such as doctor, scientist all get killed. He goes to Vietnam to teach after 1975, he praises the communism because they cover his eyes by taking him to all the beautiful places, not let him go by himself to hear the voice of people. There is a pastor, and his Vietnamese name is Ton That Binh. He lives in
Florida. He named himself Ton That Binh because he lived in Hue before when he was only 8 years old, so he speaks Vietnamese. His Vietnamese is as well as mine. About 2 years ago, he tells me that Vietnam is pretty good now he is going there to attend the World Protestant Convention. He says he can go wherever he wants, so I ask if he comes and visits the pastors in jail, he says he does not have time. How can he go downtown and restaurant without having time, only because he does not have his heart for others? Time is his and how he manages it. He has 24/24 and I have 24/24 too. He controls his own time and no one can control his time. He has time to go downtown, stop by coffee shop, going to the restaurant, go to the zoo to watch the monkeys, and his friends, pastor Quang, pastor Chinh, so many others but he does not go to visit them. How weird, is that because they do not let him go to visit? He is silent after that. So to people going back to Vietnam, seeing Vietnam with their hearts is different from seeing Vietnam with their heads. The look into Vietnam sometimes gets dim by the communists. Not that I want to launch propaganda for everybody in the world to against communist but they have to really listen, have to see the truth, and nothing can change the truth. The dream in my life since I am here until now that I work on three things: One is for my living because I have to work to earn my living first, one is for my charity work because I want to contribute my work to all the big charity organizations which serve around the world. You know NGO is one of the charity organizations which free from government. If you work there with the title such as board director, you have to spend lot of time. When American is giving you such title, like the board title, it is not that you do not contribute anything. First, you have to have money, second you have to use your brain. You have to have good ideas, new or different ideas. You have to contribute your brain in it. You have to go to the meeting, ask if you do not know.
These things when you do charity work, you have to have money, nobody comes into the board without contribute money, you have to. Even though they invite you in without mention about money but you have to have it. People contribute $5,000.00, $10,000.00 per year, why not you to contribute. You seat there and face others isn’t it right? It is not! The big organizations in the world are exceeding America country, so you have to spend money to be the member of the International Union. You also have to use your brain to offer new or improving ideas otherwise, who would have asked you to be in the meeting and seat like a status. I want to contribute a little from my knowledge and skills within my time for the poor people in Vietnam. I work in the charity organization and involve in activities in the religious communities. One third of my time I have to earn my living, I can not ask others for money to do charity work. All charity organizations here have their plans. They do not wait until they need $5000.00 or $10,000.00 to organize an event to raise money. American people do not do that. I see the international organizations do not raise money. YMCA has hotel everywhere in the world, in New York checking in $200 per day, how much YMCA checking in? $50.00 and you have to book one month in advance. Why? Because their hotel is free, it paid-off they only collect their profits now. With the economy down they still can make 6 trillions a year. They built more than a hundred years. It is not like they just in the business. Their head quarter is in London. I want to divide my time as 1/3 to earn my living, 1/3 to do charity work, and 1/3 to work for broadcasting. I speak for people who can not voice their concern. I have my talk show on radio and TV. I write for my friends’ newspapers one article per week. I work with Little Saigon now, one article per week, Viet newspaper on Friday. I work for 176.3 FM here, and work for the radio in DC, to go around the world, to Australia, France and German. That radio goes international. I also work for
other radio stations in Houston, Seatle, Washington State, and for my friends’ radio station, I help them without pay. I know Vietnamese communication does not have money. I specially concern and talk about young people, young generation is first and second is women. I do not see lots of women active in Vietnamese community and involve in the world activity. My generation, one and a half, and second generation, I expect the Vietnamese-American, or the Vietnamese-France, or American-Vietnamese, or France-Vietnamese, or Vietnamese-Denmark, all of them are going to the main circle, for example executive, legislature and justice. I expect them to go for the little title such as member of the city, member of education. Member of education is very important, boundless important. For example, member of education in this Orange County, their salary is only about few hundreds. But they are among 5 people who can decide for Orange County 3 millions people, 6 trillions to spend per year. The education service in Garden Grove, salary of a member of education is only 700 or 600, or something like that, but they can vote 100 millions for education service for Garden Grove each year. So for that title, somebody has to give in to run for it. Before running for that title, somebody has to involve social work when they are young. YMCA is stand for Young Men Christian Association, one good thing about YMCA is not using the name of Dr. Richard who creates this organization, he is Christian, but they use all other members to be in the board. I like YMCA because the money for the storm victims, if they give $1 then the victims receive $1, they do not have to deduct 20% for office, president, and manager. The board director of New York salary is less than a million, in LA about 700-800 thousands, in Orange County has less programs so CEO salary is about 300 thousands plus all other reimbursements round up to more than 400 thousands. In San Diego is about 700 thousands and Seatle is the same. Those salaries are
not included benefits and insurances. But that money is the profits they made from their hotels and other business as well, they do not have to raise money. The salary of the Red Cross CEO is about 200 thousands. Who donates money to the Red Cross, they deduct some tens of percentage to pay for office, documents, advertisements, telephone, but YMCA does not deduct like that because they have their own investment department to make a lot of money for them. For now the former builders give YMCA two pieces of commercial land at MacArthur near by South Coast Plaza. One piece is about 5 acres and not just 2 acres, and 1 acre is about more than 2 millions commercial, and they give few acres. The CEO of YMCA does not make his own decision to take it, so he calls for the board meeting to plan what to do with it and how much it costs before take it. For example to build a center costs about 10 millions, they have to figure out where and how to get that money to build the center, and they use that center for teaching. YMCA is excellent! I praise them because they teach a young kid to be a leader, not a leader of a small village but must be a leader of a country or leader of the world. People should have their children join YMCA because they teach children to maximize their abilities, generosity, broad-minded, leadership skills. They do not want children to be a worker in the farm. I meet the president of Mexico Vincente Fox Quesada, he is from a farm and his father sends him to the city in Florida to study. When he becomes a president, he comes back to greet people there and encourage business people to let their children join them. He goes back to the farm and visits his friend who is still a farmer and work at the farm. He says if his father let him stay back at the farm and not letting him go to study in Florida, he would not become a president now. So how the young generation learns to be a leader is that parents must send them to school for training. For example Mr. President Reagan use the academic tile for refugees, and the young people
later on going back to their country to be the minister. Like the Chinese people study here and come back to reshuffle their own country. People must study and use their brain. The Vietnamese people used to give up a lot as a mother gives up food for her kids, she can skip all luxury purses to save money to buy books for her children. That is why these kids study very good. How could they be become such good students if nobody takes them to school or tutor and encourage them when they needed. Since they include the books Quoc Lan and Quang Trung in Garden Grove’s educational, the top ten in California are all Asian. Mr. President invites those outstanding kids to the White House, most of them are Asian and they are outstanding and excel in all subjects. Recently, the TV program VSN organizes the competition for Vietnamese kids, and they are really awesome. They know all about Vietnamese history back to the first dynasty, how the Hung Vuong regime is doing and how the shape of Vietnam looks like the letter S. My God! I was shock to see the Vietnamese children not even 10 years old already know all the Vietnamese history. I teach history, blue color worker and Vietnamese before, so I hope the second, third generation, and fourth generation still keeping the Vietnamese blood within them. However, I do hope that parents should speak Vietnamese at home. The Chinese people who live in San Francisco. I know they come here to work on the railroad before they do not speak any English at home. They born as the third and fourth generations, but only speak Chinese at home, I do not know if they can write Chinese, but I am very impress that they can keep that tradition. My advice is that I wish all and any kids in the world are going to the main circle to run for legislature, executive and justice. We speak for people who can not speak, so language fluently is a must. Older generation’s English is not as good as children who born here. I dream that I should give up my life and should be able to serve the society. How we train a
kid to be a leader of the society, and not letting anybody to walk all over him or her. If we have a big title and important position in the society, we can have our voices heard in the congress, government, senates and the White House. The power of strong communities all around the world should make the communist to change. Their own children are studying in here too because they open their heads to learn here they must change. Even when they become the leaders, they should change because their study influenced from the freedom and democracy here. Do you see that is the dream, like I escape by a small boat and the water gets in makes everybody wet. We are all waiting to die, Catholic people are praying to God, Budda people are praying to Buddist, the boat is almost sink but we are lucky to see an American private ship pass by, the American Captain is so nice, he only change one degree of the compass just to save us. We are not even imagined what if this ship only going straight toward their direction, we never been saved. After I come here, that Captain is living in Paris now, he is in the sixty by that time, he might be around 100 years old now. He might be alive because I do not contact him, so I am only guessing. When we save people, do not think they pay us back, just do whatever for others. If I see an old lady carries heavy stuffs to cross the street, I will help her to bring her stuffs to other side. Her stuffs are heavy she can not see the cars coming and it just a small thing for me to do. I come to people house and see their flowers in the front getting dry I come in the office getting a glass of water and water for them. Even it just a small thing to help others, I just do it. I do want everybody to think about others. I also want people not to jealous or hate others, not to talk bad about others or don’t even check on the facts and judge others. I work with a good conscience of a journalist. I work for Trang Den newspapers from
Vietnam to here, so the owners sponsor me here from Philliphine. I stay with them for awhile and writing reports for their weekly newspaper. I work in school too.

TVD: Do you escape?

ATN: I escaped by boat with a group of friends.

TVD: Where did you get sponsor to?

ATN: To Glendale in Los Angeles. I arrived at 2:00AM, I start my report at 8:00AM, then go to school at 12:00PM.

TVD: How do you know those two people?

ATN: When we almost loose our country, the Hoa Binh newspaper that I work for is closed, so I go to work for Mrs. President of Trang Den newspaper. She and I are going together to support Vietnamese refugees from the Middle Vietnam. They live temporary in elementary schools in Phuoc Thi. We give rice, yucca and sweaters to refugees there. That time father Joe in Phan Thiet Vietnam takes 300 people to Saigon. He asks Mr. Ambassador Martin to take them in, but Mr. Martin is confused and only allows Father Joe in, but Father Joe refused to go without his people. Father Joe comes here and goes to Thailand to support refugeed camp at Songla. He comes back to America when his health is getting weak. Father Joe helps many people at Catholic Center in refugeed camp Songla, so every year people gather together to pray for him on his anniversary, a caucasian Priest who has a heart bigger than anyone can imagined. Mrs. Jackie Bong Wright was a widow of an Administrator who got assassinated. Later on she re-married to Mr. Ambassador Lacy Wright in Thailand. Both of them are very helpful to our people. He is going to accept his work in Lao I will visit him when I have a chance. Not only Jackie Bong Wright is good to our people, but Mrs. Hong, the wife of Mr. Holland Ambassador in Thailand, is also very good to Vietnamese people. Maybe I am lucky to meet more good
people than bad people in life. Many people give up their life to help poor people not only Vietnamese but also other nationalities in the world they help Vietnamese people without consider races. I work with charity and other organization because of the newspaper I meet many people and many of them are far better than I can imagined. I concern about the nursing home around here which has about 100-125 people, most of them are Vietnamese about more than 100. The majority there has family coming to visit, but how about lonely people there? Who are they? Most of them are the former Vietnamese soldiers who honorably fought for each of the battles during the war before. They do not need anything now, so when you visit them just listen to their stories or tell them a joke to make them happy. That should be a kindness act to pay back what they had been done for the country. Like the big concert Thank You, the Vietnamese Republican handicapped soldiers from Ms. Major Nguyen Thi Hanh Nhan, with a group of organizers every year, or every two years. It’s very emotional and meaningful because there are family members who had lost both of their legs. Each year the big concert earns around million of dollars, but the handicapped soldiers are so many. Each received only one hundred dollars which is not much, but that makes them happy to think about people from other country still remember them. Their spirit is up because of that. Think about Saigon now it costs $5.00 per a bowl of soup at least, and $100 to a person who has to sell even a chair, a table, an incense container, and any beautiful things in the house, and receives $100 it’s not that big of a deal, but the value is better for their spirit. I hope that we have comfortable life we should think about other people who can’t even make their living everyday. Even teachers, they are educators and only love children, but if their family member is in the army or in jail, they are not allowed to teach anymore. I know the President of YMCA at Vietnam, he completed the study from the Pope’s Institute, but his father is a Major in the army and in jail without released date, so the communist doesn’t let him
become a priest. He become homeless in Binh Thuan, and raises the cows for 9 years until Binh Thuan is getting dry up that he can not do anything. He comes to Saigon, being homeless again, and he meets a lady who he falls in love and married. Later on, he works as a volunteer for YMCA, and the CEO of YMCA died from a sudden accident, they promote him from Assistant to the President of YMCA because he is knowledgable and have Ph. D degree before. Think about what he went through just because his father is in jail he can not even be a citizen, so he can’t even make his living. He has to eat yucca, raises cows until cows can’t even survive in the dry area. What a society! One more thing, this is my dream that we should have a big Vietnamese Library where we have all the books from the South Vietnam, not only books from the North, because the North always publishs propagated books to send to Indonesia after 1975 when the trade still allowed there. They send to the charity organization, so that it makes to the congress charity, tons of the propaganda books. I talk to Mr. Frank Jao about Little Saigon Phuoc Loc Tho, everybody in the world wants to visit that place such as the President candidate comes too. I just take a lady from Fineland for a tour, she asks me to take her to Phuoc Loc Tho before gets into my car. I ask how she knows about that since she lives in Europe for decades and she says that she watches CNN in Europe, she sees the President and President Candidate visit that place. I talk to Mr. Trieu Phat, Frank Jao about how to have a book store or library to collect all the Vietnam War and Vietnamese people and he agrees to give a space inside Phuoc Loc Tho, but I am not retired yet to handle it, I will do it when I am retired. I will read all the books that write about the truth with emotion, I will pay to publish those books to keep. All good writers, who do not have money to publish because they are not famous yet and do not know lots of people. For me, I haven’t have a chance to continue to write, but many publishers including American publishers want to give me money in advance to write the books. I do not have time to
do it yet even though they suggest to pay me first. Unlike others who just want to publish books but do not have money or opportunity like me, so getting to know more people in the network is great. I see Mr. Trieu Phat is a good man, very generous and has good heart, he also pays attention to the culture too. He is lucky to have his wife, Kathy, who understands and support him. For example, he likes to focus on culture she will support him with culture. How can they get along if she is against what he is doing, because the money is from both of them. They are getting along like the tunes of music. I love this couple, and I dream the same like he says now we have organizations that need volunteer people to be the leaders and to be responsible and have creative ideas to develop this work. Nobody wants to read old books. I believe we have a lot of talented people in our community. They should volunteer to work on this project as they retired, so our next generations will benefit from it. Just like my book Chinh Chien Doi Linh in Vietnam, I publish one book in the 60’s. I publish another one Chinh Chien Huu Linh in 1994. People help me with that book already passed away. For example, the writer, Ta Ti, from the army who stays too long in prison. He comes to America from HO and died here. He draws the cover for my book. A poet, Nguyen Sa, is my professor in philosophy, writes the introduction for me, already passed away. One more person named Hoa Huyen, he studied abroad here in the 90’s and earned Doctorate degree. He also a President of Asian Pacific of Norway Congress. There are millions of books in Congress Library, so I can not find my own book. Dr. Hoa Huyen helps me to find information, using copy machine, earn money even we only met for the first time. I was devoted after come back from the meeting at Garmig, I stay there for a month to look for documents. If I have more time I will write a lot more articles and more books about that. I hope when I retired, I will write about the American life, how American family life, I live in Mrs. Pat Ducray family for a period of time. He is a president of an oil company, and also a
president of a branch from Bank of America. Now they move to East Norman. I know American people are very honest. They help people with all efforts and love people with all their hearts. I know a couple, the wife is from England, and husband is from France, and also in YMCA board of directors have tens of people, you can say 90% of them come from Europe or Europe root such as France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland. Now back to the education, and how to focus on the future of young generations, we have to help them. If we let them work and study just like American people, how can they graduate in 3 or 4 years. Parents have to help them from the 12th grade and above. They need to pay their apartment, car payment, car insurance, and they have to work full time to pay for it, so it may take 8 years or longer to graduate. The economic is down now, about tens of percent students are going back to live with parents. First they feel warm to live with family especially when they sick at least they have some body to talk to. Besides the warm spirit, they are saving things like food when having one more person to eat in the same table and same cooking. I dream that all people should have their relationship tight with the family. I also dream that how the members of NGO going to Vietnam with the plans. I meet a lot of them while going to the convention in Denmark, Holland, Finelad, Germany, and NGO in Europe jump to Vietnam the most, how to reach to the hands of people. When it comes to the people, the Red Cross passes it to the government to check, and they sell those bags of rice under the Red Cross on the labels. The YMCA gives directly to the people hands. They loan $300 for purchasing equipments and continue to loan to others after the money gets returned. I see the YMCA works on many good things. They take in all orphanates from the Middle Vietnam and teach them to fix automobile, electronic, sewing, embroider. People from the board buy and pay money back to them. There are deaf or mute children, but they embroidered so beautiful and lively.

TVD: How many times you came back to Vietnam?
ATN: Two times! From the North, to the Plateau, to Da Lat, to the Middle Vietnam, but I don’t feel good at all. First the people in the countryside are the poorest, poorer than 1975. Second, I do not feel good wherever I go because the security guard always around me even when I go to the temple, people record me with recorder when I arrived to Hue and Ha Noi’s airports, I feel the dangers right before my eyes. I visit a Bishop at Hue, and after I left, the police come and ask “where is the delegation?” The Bishop says he does not know because they come and go, they do not say anything to me. I do not feel good because I only have a meal with them and leave. How can I feel good if I stay there who know they can come to arrest me at night perhaps. I have relatives but I do not want to stay at their house for my own safety, I have to stay at the hotel and pay a couple of hundreds, so I do not feel good at all. I came back the second time in 2005. I hope I will come back more before I die. I dream when I retired, I go back to Vietnam to help old people, the orphantes. I want to share my knowledge to our Vietnamese people, but I do not know if I can teach there or not because not everyone can teach there. For example, Father Dao Quang Chinh, he is vey good, he has doctorate degree for education. In 80, 84, he asks to teach in Vietnam, but they do not let him. His grandmother died and he asks to go back for her funeral while he is the only Asian with a high position as President of American Priest for Immigration Services so they let him go back by escort him from the airport to the funeral service then go back to the airport right away after buried her. What a waste of the trip! For a Priest if he teaches people, he only educates them with good things not the bad ones. How can they have other countries help or only they have to be changed. Now the danger of loosing the country, Hoang Sa, Truong Sa, and let Chinese people come in without VISA, they can come as many as they want, that is so dangerous because we can not control it and we will loose our
authority very fast. We send 800 thousands people to be slave or poor labor in other
countries, but we bring 200 Chinese people to work in Vietnam. We do not have enough
work for Vietnamese but provide work for Chinese people to develop our own country.
Why not create work for Vietnamese so they do not have to be slave for people all over the
world. Do you see? I just have a meeting in Malaysia with the world youth students in 2006,
and meet people who work as labor at the hotel. They take care of garden, water trees, cut
grass, clean up the house, but the trader keeps their passports and visa to control their pay,
for example, if they get pay $2 per hour, the trader takes more than half of the pay. So if
these trades do not have permission from the police or government, how can they do that?
These traders have to turn-in to Vietnamese Communist authority if the government here
is not in the same side. So the social situation here is from the corruption of Vietnam, the
leaders who take everything and dictate everything such as dropping the legislature, no
more competition campaign, so the country end up with many situations like working to
earn $2 per hour but more than $1 taking away. I hope it will change since 1000 years slave
to Chinese we still speak Vietnamese, still are Vietnamese not turn into Chinese or speak
Chinese. We are worry now about the danger of invasion from Truong Sa, Hoang Sa
because it takes only 50 miles from the ocean to the South, it will be fast if they want to.
Vietnamese people in other country are not at ease because we still have our family,
parents, sisters, brothers, friends and relatives back home. Even we all left the country
suppessly, we still have our ancestors'grave and our handicapped soldiers there. We owed
them, so we want to contribute our effort to unite the community, no envy, not devided or
separated because if we do that, the communis will win. We do not have enough force here
in America, only 3 millions people in the world. If we do not united, we are not going to
win. We work together, vote for the President, the congress. I vote for you, giving you money with condition that you have to concern about human rights, freedom for democracy, people rights and freedom for religion. If we can help people and they will help us. We vote for them how can they are not helping us. So people in democracy and republican countries are very concern about problems in Vietnam. For example Mr. Donald Edvoi Republican, Mrs. Lupin Demoncracy, Mr. Smith Republican from the East are all concern about problems in Vietnam. They concern about us, we have to do something about it, we vote for them, donate money for them. When we ask, they will answer. Like this Mrs comes and visits me, what is her benefit? I have to interview her on Radio, TV and newspapers if not what makes her come here from the Congress. She has been here not so long but come and visit me not once but many times. So we have to do things for people first and they will naturally do it for you. If I don't write about Tay Tang, how will I be in the conference to meet Dai La Lat Ma. You have to write about them, on their side, and you can meet them, see the most important person from Dai La Lat Ma signed the book for me. I have to do it first. I take care of my husband in the family when he gets home and tired from work I give him a glass of hot milk, or I concern when I see a tie on sale, I buy for him. He is human nature, how can he ignore my care? The ones next to me is my children, I cut their toes nails when it is getting long, and if I am not who will do it for them? I gave birth to them. You have a papaya now whether you pick up from the garden or someone gives it to you, and you give your husband and children the bigger pieces and you just eat a little. How can they not love you? Like my mother boils a chicken, she gives all the good and better parts to my father and us, she only eats what left from the chicken which is only bones. She used to tell us that she only likes bones not meat, but that is how she gives up
for family. Who does not like meat? She eats only bones and save each chicken thigrant for her husband and children. So if my mother lives like that, my parent-in-law on the father’s day or mother’s day, I buy them gifts. If I don’t have a lot of money I buy a small gift, or with no money, I can cut flowers in my yard bundle it nice and give to my mother-in-law. I treat them the same way for their birthdays, new years because if they are not good how can they give birth to a good person like my husband. So the same way I teach my children, they have to give up for others, think about other people first before think about themselves. That how you can live everywhere, from the mountain to the sea and they can live happily and comfortably like that. Let me tell you why I have my own business. I stay with a family that has big business, president of the bank, and president of an oil company, they must be pretty good! The lady, owner of the house, she has master degree and very generous. She helps the Church and the poor people a lot. She is very subtle, and I am very happy and comfortable to live with her family during the time my husband is not here. I am blessed to live around all good people. I meet some bad people but very little, most of them are very good. From my professors to landlord, doctors, teachers, they are all good to me. I study non-stop for the real estates. At first I plan to study Ph. D so I can go back to Vietnam to teach when I have a chance, if not in Vietnam maybe in East Asia, but later on I think Vietnam is really in need of money, so I have to do business to send money home to help my family and friends. If I wait until I have my Ph. D, my love ones may died already, so I do not have a chance to help. I decide to open my own business, many people tell me that: “How come you be in real estates almost 30 years, you still renting houses, that business only makes a little money!” But I tell them when I just start my business, I just help people to rent, I don’t have any money but I have good credit. The people want to rent
do not have any credit, so landlord doesn’t want to rent out. I have to put my own credit to sponsor for them and sign an affidavit to make sure if they do not pay rent, I will be responsible for it. That time I just start my business, I don’t know if my business is going to make money, but I believe in people. They are all good and not harm me for not paying the rent. I also sponsor for their cars, and they never let me go to Court for any car accidents or missing payments for their housing. I thank God for blessing me on those things I have done for others, so whoever needs my help I will do it within my abilities. There are some people buying house and owed me money such as $5000, $10000, I forgot about that until they pay me, and I do not have any paperworks to prove that loan, they still pay me. I don’t need to write down everything. You see the Chinese people do business, they only talk about that but never broke their words. Here we have hundreds of paperworks, but the Chinese is successful in business because they respect their words. I train my real estates staff when they first come to work with me that if they can’t remember everything, they need to write down what they promise to do for the clients. For example, we promise to give them a tree, what kind of tree do they like or if the owner brought that tree with them when they moved, we have to buy the same tree to plant there for the new owner as we promise. We have to write down what we promise otherwise we have to pay even in our next life. When we promise something to offer like I promise to send $5000 to help the people around Cuu Long’s river like Ca mau province, because I know it’s getting flooded every year. I am looking for someone now to deliver my promise. I have to look for people who have good hearts to buy and give rice to the hands of people who needs it by themself, and not giving $5000 to Mr. A or Mr. B who want to to it but too busy to do. Actually $5000 you spend so fast, but it’s a big help to others. Two years ago, I have a very nice client and
she sells her house at South Coast Plaza, every year she buys rice and sail the small boat around the river villages to give to the poor people. There are lots of good people who quietly help others without anyone knows about it. We have to do it if not be afraid that we do not have time to do it. Don't think that young people won't died, one car accident you might lose your legs or arms or even die from it, and young people still get stroke so if you like anything you must do it! Do not wait and regret about it. So if I promise anything now I have to write down to paper in case something happen my family will have to fullfil my promise, because if I do not do it right away and die tonight, who will do it for me and how could I close my eyes and die like that. I train my employee to non-stop learning and have to be honest to themselves and the clients. My business is still going for decades because how I treat others. The most important thing is keep people love and care, what you must do to earn people love and care. For example, we have TV and radio programs and there is no reason for not announcing the holidays such as Phat Dang for Buddist or Noel for Catholic. We do not need them to ask, but we are willing to announce since we know the date and time. So people think I do non-sense stuff, nobody asks me to do that! But when I think it's the right thing to do, I do it. I don't wait until they ask. I do things like that year after year and do not mind about what people think, the more I do the more work awaiting for me. Charity work is never ending, and nobody ever take that work away from me. Now that I go to the temple to get the news, announce the Phat Dang day, and nobody does that non-sense like me. I wake up 6:00AM to go to Bao Quang temple. I water the trees which dried up even though so many people come there, nobody does that. There is only one monk in charge of the temple and other young monk. I water from 6AM to 8AM and still not
finish, but I have to open my office at 8AM, so I left about 1/3 of it, not only the trees but
even the grass is getting dry.

TVD: Do you do that for Bao Quang temple?

ATN: All temples: Bao Quang, Minh Dang Quang Tinh Xa, A di da Su Co Nhu Ngoc, Truc Lam, Hue Quang... you only say the name of the temple, I will go there without address. I go to all
of the temples and churches already, so give me the name of any temple or church, I go
there with my eyes closed.

TVD: I have some munites left. Do you want to tell me any story or anything that you want
to tell me?

ATN: I want to say our people give up a lot, so we have to be proud to be Vietnamese for
generations. I have a nephew, and his children speak Vietnamese very well. They speak and
learn Vietnamese when they are only 3 because their parents are teaching Vietnamese.
Proud to be Vietnamese and those young Vietnamese must go to the main circle such as
executive, legislature and justice. They should encourage their children to go back to
Vietnam with the World Organizations for Charity such as NGO, MYCA, Red Cross and other
organizations from chapter of the union world. When you involve in the world
organizations, it helps you to get the world organizations to intervene your obstruction. I
also expect to see more Vietnamese classes all around the world to help younger
generations to learn Vietnamese. For example, there is a former Vietnamese student named
My Lan who learns Vietnamese at Hue Quang temple, and now she becomes a dentist, going
well with her career, and still comes back to teach Vietnamese at the same temple. There
are other younger generations from Vietnamese Army, be proud of your older generations
who are the mighty soldiers of Vietnam Republican Army. Be proud of your own history
with a thousand year against China, one hundred year against France, and continuously against Cruel Communist Regime. That is my dream, and I also dream that more and more young people are going to the broadcasting career. That career is very hard because it’s not our native language, but I do hope that our younger generation who born here should have to join American and become a TV anchor or TV/Radio Commentator. The broadcasting career is very close to human, it gives the opportunity to interview presidents of countries. Interview a president of the country we have an opportunity to voice our concern about the Communist Regime in Vietnam which has no human rights and freedom for democracy. Being in the broadcasting career, it means getting closer to the presidents of many countries, you have a chance to ask for help while you are not strong enough to fight for freedom of democracy and human rights in Vietnam. My point is not only American-Vietnamese, but all lucky people live everywhere in the world especially the young people should be in the executive, legislature, justice and broadcasting career to be able to work with all famous presidents in the world. I do wish that young people work to become presidents of the bank, or owners of Hollywood Universal stock. All American-Vietnamese, French-Vietnamese, German-Vietnamese who live all around the world should be in the positions of all the important responsibilities in the world, so that we will love and unite together. The lucky people like the Assistant of Prime Minister in Germany, Phillip, he was an orphan and became an important person in one of the richest country in Europe. Thinking about our country, our ancestors, I always want to do at least something for the country and that’s also my dream. Do I dream a lot?

TVD: That is good because I learn a lot from you too!
ATN: But I do not dream for myself, I dream for others such as in my book “Chinh Chiến Điều Linh” I write about other people’s dreams not mine. I dream for the handicapped soldiers to have wheelchairs. I worked on that wheelchair project before by translating and writing articles and a lot of people like that. So dreaming to get the poor and orphanage people to have rice to eat, clothes to wear, going to school, and the old people have someone to take care of them so they have medications. I dream more and more for other people who need help. I thank God for my life now that I have my health, have good friends, meet nice people, learn from good people such as Mr. President of the U. S. Committees who in charge of decision maker, I interviewed and took picture with him. I meet the Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan everytime he is here. I meet the Bishop Hoang Ngoc in Kontum, he is a soldier’s fighting spirit, and Bishop Nguyen Van Tien from Bac Ninh. I come to Bac Ninh for dinner and meet Bishop Thê, Cardinal Minh Mẫn, most of them if I am not a journalist, I never have a chance to meet them. I also meet a General of Australia Royal Army in Vietnam and in Australia too. I meet Mr. Senator William and most of the senators in states. I take pictures with the Presidents like President Carter, President Reagan, President George Bush Sr. and President George Bush Jr., I received the Women of Distinction award in 2004 or 2005 in the White House. I meet Monsignor Lat Ma, he signed the book for my gift. All the special privileges I have just because I work in the broadcasting career. So I encourage young people to work in the broadcasting, it’s amazingly attractive. We learn a lot in this type of work. I wish you to finish this project and find an opportunity to work in CNN channel or work on something that involve in the world so you have a chance to travel around the world. Each trip you will learn different things from people and other environments. Be ready to try because you are so young and beautiful so keep it up!

TVD: Thank you very much!